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By

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**BOARDS IN DISTRESS: SCHOOL BOARDS' AND SUPERINTENDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING
CONFLICT**

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CONFLICT**

by

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DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated

To my great aunt, Dorethia Wyatt, for letting me know that I was special and different
for a reason and showing me the way to God.

&

to my special gifts from God,

Evan Lamar White and Ethan Lavar White.

It's not where you came from; it's where you are going that counts.

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Philippians 3:13-14

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love, support and advise.

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listening to my prayers all along the way.

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This study examined the perceptions of school board members and superintendents of their role and responsibilities during conflict. The following research questions were the focus of this study: (1) What type of group interactions occurred among the school board members and between the board and the superintendent? (2) How did the board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent? (3) What ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence board/superintendent cohesiveness? (4) What ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on board/superintendent cohesiveness?

A good working relationship between an elected school board and an appointed superintendent is crucial in order for the school district to attain its district goals and improve student achievement. The school board members need to understand not only

their roles and functions, but also the role and function of the superintendent. If a healthy relationship is not developed, then the school district and their stakeholders will be in a constant power struggle (Estes, 1979). A well-rounded working relationship between the school board and the superintendent is imperative if the district wants to achieve the goals set by the school board and to meet the mandates and requirements from federal and state agencies.

Utilizing a qualitative multiple case study with a social action system theory approach, direct observations, individual interviews, and document reviews were used to collect data in this research study. Open, axial, and selective coding were used to analyze the qualitative data that was collected.

This study supported themes in practice that emerged through the data in school districts with healthy board/superintendent relationships. The themes included: (a) honesty; (b) free flowing communication; (c) mutual respect; and (g) trust.

This study also supplemented the existing research with additional themes that emerged from the individual interviews, direct observation and documents. These emergent themes included: (a) lack of communication; (b) dishonesty; (c) favoritism.

The results of this study provided information related to strategies that aid in the development and the improvement of the school board and superintendent relationship. It contributed to the field of knowledge by highlighting the importance of improving the school board and superintendent relationship. This study can serve as a guide for designing training for school boards and superintendents. It could also help determine if

a single method or a combination of methods would help to develop or improve the relationship between the school board and the superintendent.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

An Aesop fable tells how parts of the body are dependent on each other. All parts except the stomach assumed the stomach had an idle life of luxury. Those parts believed their time was spent laboring, supporting, and ministering to the wants, needs and pleasures of the stomach; so, they decided to cut off the stomach's supplies. The hands were no longer to carry food to the mouth, nor the mouth to receive it, nor the teeth to chew it. Shortly after they had agreed upon this course of starving the stomach into subjection, they began, one by one, to fail. Eventually the whole body wasted away. In the end, the other parts realized that the stomach, cumbersome and useless as it seemed, also had an important function of its own, and that they could not exist without the stomach just as the stomach could not do without them.

Like the multiple parts of the body, the school board and community members can believe the school district would perform better without the superintendent. They see the superintendent's role as one of luxury, believing the superintendent is overpaid, enjoys too many personal perks, and produces few results for the district. In the fable the other body parts learned that the stomach has an integral role in keeping the body healthy and running properly. However, many school boards suspend, fire, or buy out the superintendent, assuming improved results will follow. They never learned that the relationship between the school board and the superintendent is important in order to achieve the districts' goals and objectives.

A recent example from a school district illustrates the interdependence of the board, superintendent, teachers and community. The school board and the superintendent were placed under the watchful eye of the state's educational agency. A monitor had been assigned by the state agency to supervise the decisions of the school board and the relationship between the board members and the superintendent. The monitor conducted an independent study on the operation of the school district. In the study, the superintendent received high marks for his performance as a leader. The report also showed the school district moving in the right direction as test scores were increasing. However, the school board did not welcome the report; instead, they wanted to reduce the superintendent's car allowance and eliminate his bonus based on the amount of federal grants awarded to the district. The commissioner of education believed the monitor was not making progress with the district, so a conservator was assigned. Eventually the superintendent and school board reached a buy-out agreement. The acting superintendent announced that the buy-out resulted in budget cuts which influenced district employees' benefits, salaries, and reduced educational programs.

This demonstrates how the relationship between the school board and superintendent affects those individuals, but also affects the whole district. A mutual agreement on departure was reached between the school board and the superintendent; however, the students and the district employees' felt the effects of this decision, which in turn can affect student achievement.

A good working relationship between the school board and the superintendent is imperative in order for the school district to attain its district goal. The school board

members need to understand their roles and functions, but also the role and function of the superintendent. If this relationship is not well developed, then the school district, like the body in the fable, will waste away.

Estes (1979), believes it is necessary for the superintendent to work toward creating a positive relationship between the school board and the superintendent. Estes (1979) says the superintendent must possess eight qualities in order to create a positive relationship with the school board, employees, and community:

1. A sound conceptual and theoretical basis for educational programming.
2. An appreciation of the dynamics of the local communities and the establishment of responsive management practices and structure to address the needs of local constituents.
3. The ability to engage in constructive dialogue with local boards of education and to assist boards in exercising leadership in their respective communities.
4. The political astuteness and ability to interact with the local, state, and federal government structure in a constructive manner.
5. The ability to direct management, including an ability to assemble an effective management team, and to assure productivity and harmony in the school district.
6. The ability to formulate and monitor effective regulatory policies and procedures, which will facilitate efficient school operations.
7. The ability to provide the emotional and spiritual support and leadership for the school district.
8. An awareness of resources and knowledge necessary to do the job of running the public school (p. 27).

Simply stated, a well-rounded working relationship between the school board and the superintendent is imperative if the district wishes to achieve the goals determined by the school board, and meet the mandates and requirements from federal and state

agencies. To achieve this relationship, Eadie (2003) suggests using three effective strategies. These strategies encourage the school board and superintendent to become experts in the field of governance (Eadie, 2003). First is putting partnership at the top of the list, followed by specializing in the governing business. Second is empowering the school board and turn them into owners by spicing up the governance stew by getting the administrators on board. Third is keeping expectations in sync and stay on the high growth path.

Eadie (2003) also explains the need for national organizations and agencies to review with the school board and superintendent their roles and responsibilities. When the school board members understand their roles, duties, and functions, the foundation for effective governance is laid. Role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities can cause conflict between the school board and the superintendent. Conflict is due in part to the disequilibrium between lay control and the power of professional expertise, and also in part to the ambiguous nature of policy making and functions in educational governance (Iannoucone & Lutz, 1970; Tallerico, 1989; Tucker & Zeigler, 1980; Zeigler, Kehoe, & Reisman, 1985). According to Eadie (2003), effective training would help school boards and superintendents develop methods or strategies to circumvent and resolve any problems that may cause conflict.

Establishing a good school board and superintendent relationship is not just the responsibility of the superintendent. According to Smoley (1999), the school board must work to fulfill its responsibilities. Smoley identified five behaviors that play an essential role in the school board's functioning as a group. First, school board members

need to share an understanding about certain aspects of the way they appear as a group. Second, the school board needs to demonstrate clear behaviors of leadership. Third, the school board needs to consciously express its common group mission in order to convey that the school board is working to achieve common ends. Fourth, the school board needs to share common values, which they use as the basis for their actions. Finally, school board members need to show respect by recognizing the value and importance of their individual contributions (Smoley, 1999).

The school board members must balance the need to exercise authority and support for the superintendent. Smoley (1999) discusses how school boards need to act in roles that clearly define the relationship between the school board and the superintendent. The authority is defined through various activities of the school board, such as agenda setting, planning, and evaluating the superintendent. Another effective practice that he suggests is taking initiative in determining the action(s) needed to further the goals for the districts. At times school boards might need to make decisions that go against the recommendations of the superintendent. Such decisions might be difficult as the school board members are faced with pressure from the administration, teachers, parents, the community and the state (Workman, 2003). Changing or improving the relationship between the superintendent and the board suggests a form of governance that removes the power from the hands of a few (the board) and places it into the hands of many (parent, teachers, administrators, and community members) (Edwards, 1999; Workman, 2003). Smoley (1999) also proposes that school boards need to address the critical issues that link programs with policy, plan long-term in order to lead the

organization, adjust its role in accomplishing the work of the district, and make decisions with a perspective that includes the community's needs and opinions.

Goodman and Zimmer (2000) identified seven strategies to strengthen the school board and superintendent relationship:

1. A redefinition of student achievement to include a broad array of educational goals.
2. A strong unified leadership and governance body at the school district level, with the overriding goal of providing quality education for all children
3. New state laws on school district governance to support the unified school board and superintendent leadership team.
4. Mobilizing communities and staff to focus on high student achievement.
5. A new approach to preparing and training school boards and superintendents that will support their coming together as unified leadership teams.
6. Public training for high student achievement.
7. The establishment of a National Center for School Board and Superintendent Leadership, which will be responsible for advocating and implementing these strategies and for carrying out the research to support continuous improvement in the leadership of local school systems. (p. 5)

Scholars have developed prescriptions for a strong school board and superintendent relationship. Baldwin and Hughes (1995) discuss four competencies: leadership, personnel, organization, and policy. Chait, Holland and Taylor (1991) suggest six competencies: contextual, educational, interpersonal, analytical, political, and strategic. Smoley (1999) also suggests effectiveness in making decisions, functioning as a group, exercising authority, connecting to the community, working toward board improvement, and acting strategically are important.

Many researchers (see for example, Chait, Holland, & Taylor, 1991) have attempted to describe and define the characteristics, methods, strategies, competencies, of the ideal school board and superintendent relationship. Can a single method or strategy improve the relationship between the school board and superintendent to achieve an effective relationship, or does it take a combination of methods or strategies? These and similar questions may be addressed by an examination of the types of process used by the school board and the superintendent to resolve conflict and/or maintain a healthy working relationship. The results obtained from this examination would help other school boards and superintendents determine what, if anything, can help to prevent conflict, create a positive working relationship, and promote the goals of the district, ultimately improving and increasing the academic success of all students.

Statement of Problem

The current guidelines for school boards and superintendents in Texas, not changed or modified since the 1900s, require school board members to be elected or, in case of a vacancy, appointed. The school board assumes the role of the policy-making body for the school system and continually evaluates the effects of its policies on the school district while relying on the superintendent for the implementation. The superintendent, who is hired by the school board, implements the policies set forth by the school board, assumes responsibility for the operation of the school system, and serves as adviser to the school board (Smoley, 1999). The dividing line between the responsibilities of the school board and the superintendent is not clear to many school boards and superintendents. School districts often face conflict between the school

board and the superintendent. The reasons for this conflict vary, but regardless of the source, conflict at the helm almost always has a detrimental effect on the organization (Canada, 1989).

Role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities are two of the primary factors that hinder the relationship between the school board and superintendent (Allison, 1991; Allison, Allison, & McHenry, 1995; Education Commission of the United States, 1999, National School Board Association, 1996; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2002). However, defining the roles and functions, developing strategies to handle conflict, and creating a positive relationship between the school board and superintendent could improve the relationship (Smoley, 1999). A smooth relationship is a key component of the school district's ability to achieve their goals and objectives.

The governance of public schools requires a productive school-board-and – superintendent relationship that focuses on student achievement. The development of this relationship can improve the effectiveness of the district. It will help to create a healthy climate that filters throughout the district. This improvement could have a positive influence on the community by increasing financial and moral backing. This could influence the development of the community and increase the population of the area. A positive improvement by the school district could be used as an incentive for economic development. On the state and national level, this improvement could bring financial and other recognition. The greatest benefit for the school district would be a high completion rate and a good-to-outstanding rating from the state. The greatest benefit for the community would be the production of responsible and qualified workers.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to add to the understanding of methods used by school boards and superintendents to prevent role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities. To improve the quality of the school district, it is critical that everyone knows and understands his/her role, to ensure that the district is doing everything possible to accomplish the goals and objectives of the district, and meet the mandates and requirements from federal and state agencies. It is also the intent of this study to investigate how the relationship between the school board and the superintendent affect the superintendent's job. Finally, the intent of the study is to demonstrate the gap in the research on how this relationship affects student achievement.

Research Questions

1. What type of group interactions occurred among the school board members and the superintendent?
2. How did the board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent?
3. In what ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence board/superintendent relationship?
4. In what ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on the board/superintendent relationship?

Research Method

The methodological approach is based on an interpretivist perspective. In this approach the researcher interprets the thoughts and feelings of the participants and

develops common themes and trends. The conceptual model is based on Talcott Parsons' social action system (Black, 1961).

For this study the participants were chosen by purposeful sampling. It utilized single qualitative case studies (Merriam, 1998) and the naturalistic inquiry (Crotty, 2003) of three superintendents and school boards in the state of Texas. Qualitative case study can be defined in terms of the process of carrying out the investigation. Open and axial coding were used as a means of unit analysis and trustworthiness was sought by utilizing the methods of Miles and Huberman (1994).

The researcher used in-depth, open-ended interviews; direct observation; and written documents. The principal sources of data were the school board members and the superintendent. Secondary sources were documents and memos. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Notes were going to be made on all observations, such as interviews and meetings. The on-site research material such as board agendas, board packet and newsletters were gathered from the sources listed above.

Definition of Terms

1. Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): Texas Education Agency grading system that provides campus and district rating for all of Texas public and charter school districts. The system features four accountability ratings, which are based upon performance levels on three base indicators; student performance on Texas Assessment of Knowledge Skills (TAKS), attendance, and dropout rates.

- a. Exemplary – Ninety percent passing rate in each area of TAKS for all students and in each subpopulation (ethnic groups and low socioeconomic). One percent or less dropout rate, Ninety four percent or better attendance rate;

- b. Recognized – Eighty percent passing rate in each area of TAKS for all students and in each subpopulation. Three and half percent or less dropout rate, Ninety four percent or better attendance rate;
 - c. Academically Acceptable – Forty five percent passing rate in each area of TAKS for all students and in each subpopulation. Six percent or less dropout rate, Ninety four percent or better attendance rate;
 - d. Academically Unacceptable – Forty four percent or below in each area of TAKS for all students and in each subpopulation. Seven percent or greater dropout rate, Ninety three percent or better attendance rate;
- (Texas Education Agency, 2005)

2. Board: shortened term for the term school board and is used interchangeably throughout the study.
3. Board member: person elected or appointed as a school board trustee of a local school district.
4. Governance: the implementation of legally authorized collective actions, functions, and decision-making powers of the school board.
5. Governance model: various models proposed governing a school district.
6. Governance process: used interchangeably for governance model.
7. Monitor: a person assigned by the Commissioner of Education to supervise the day-to-day operation of a school district.
8. School board: the elected body of the community, empowered to make decisions about a school district within the mandates given by the states, in Texas, usually consisting of seven members.
9. Superintendent: the chief executive and advisory officer charged with the direction of schools in a local system, a district, city, town, or township.
10. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS): statewide test given to students in every grade level, starting in the third grade. Promotion to the following grade level is contingent upon meeting required test standards.

11. Texas Education Agency (TEA): the agency established by the legislature to govern education in the State of Texas.

12. Training: the process of teaching or learning a skill or job.

Significance of the Study

The authority to control the day-to-day operations of our schools has become embedded in the superintendency. However, it is not unusual to read of a severance agreement between the board and the superintendent. One of the main reasons cited is the conflict between the school board and the superintendent. These buyouts highlight the role uncertainty of being a superintendent and the confusion of responsibilities.

This study provides information related to strategies that aid in the development and the improvement of the school board and superintendent relationship. It contributes to the field of knowledge by highlighting the importance of improving the school board and superintendent relationship. This study can serve as a guide for designing training for school boards and superintendents. It could also help determine if a single method or a combination of methods would help to develop or improve the relationship between the school board and the superintendent.

Delimitations of Study

The delimitations of the study are as follows. First, the primary focus is on school boards that have encountered conflict between the school board and the superintendent. Second, it does not focus on the turnover rates of superintendents due to a negative school board/superintendent relationship. Third, it does not include the voices of all board members. Finally, it examines the issue some time after the fact

Limitations of Study

First, the participants were volunteers. Their interest in participating may have been the result of a reflective nature. Second, the researcher assumes the participants were giving honest and candid responses. Third, the data were retrospective and recollections of past events, which were subject to selective memory. Fourth, because of the nature of this study, finding participants was limited due to legal agreements. Fifth, the TEA method of assigning a monitor was fair by their standards. Finally, the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher was trained and used reasonable and acceptable methods to minimize bias.

Assumptions

The first assumption underlying this study was the researcher's belief that the school board members and superintendent have knowledge of their role and responsibilities. Secondly, the researcher assumed the school board members and superintendent were able to remember and explain the event(s) that caused conflict. Thirdly, the researcher also assumed that the school board members and superintendents would give honest and candid responses. Finally, the researcher assumes the school board members and superintendent would be able to remember and explain their role in the event(s) that caused conflict.

Summary

A positive relationship between by the school board and the superintendent is critical in order to achieve the district's goals and objectives, thus achieving student success. This study sought to discover how role uncertainty and the confusion of

responsibilities caused conflict between a school board and superintendent. It also seeks to find common threads that contributed to the conflict. In addition the study sought to identify effective group interaction, methods for conflict management and goal setting, and how leadership and role identity affected group cohesiveness.

The next chapter contains a review of the literature that addresses the historical development of the public school, school boards, superintendents, Texas school districts and social action theory.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This literature review has a fourfold purpose. The first purpose is to review the history of public education in the United States and Texas. The second purpose is to show the historical development of school boards and superintendents. The third purpose is to provide the recommendation of the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association for school boards and superintendents, along with Texas' guidelines for school boards and superintendents. Finally, an overview of social action system theory

The Historical Development of America Public School System

In the 18th century schools were funded by local property tax, charged no tuition, were open to all white children, were governed by local school committees, and were subject to a modest amount of state regulation (Kaestle, 2001). Some of the political leaders of that era, particularly Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush and Noah Webster were concerned about the educational needs of the new nation. They thought that "schooling" should be more systematic and have more public supervision. Jefferson's plan for a state system of education was rejected by the Virginia legislature, and he complained about the pace of education reform (Kaestle, 2001).

Each state had individual methods of funding education. For example, Massachusetts passed a law in 1789 directing towns to provide elementary schools. In the 1790's, New York used profits from public land sales to establish schools. When the

money ran out, the program ended. Despite the rhetoric from the leaders of the young nation, colonial education was working well enough for most voters; they did not want more government involvement. Between 1779 and 1817 Jefferson's "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" was voted down. In his frustration he said, "There is a snail-paced gait for the advance of new ideas. People have more feelings for canals and roads than for education" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 25). In the 1840's, new social problems forced the development of a new educational system. During the 1840's and 1850's many voting Americans opposed the intervention of state government in education (Kaestle, 2001).

Jefferson continued to push public schooling even as he served as secretary of state, vice president, and finally, president. His most powerful legacy was the argument that public education was essential to democracy. He said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be" (Mondale & Patton, 2001, p. 25).

In the 1830's and 1840's Jefferson's dream of a statewide school system began to take root, most notably in Massachusetts under the supervision of Horace Mann. The latter was secretary of education for the state of Massachusetts, the first such position in the colonies. Mann wanted to develop a system that would be run and enforced by the state and entirely funded with tax dollars. His plan was vigorously opposed because it imposed state control over traditionally local concerns, and imposed a tax burden on all citizens.

There was an explosive growth in America's public schools by the end of the nineteenth century. The United States was providing more schooling to more children than any other nation, although not all children could attend public school. Inspired by Thomas Jefferson, promoted by Horace Mann and others, America's public schools held great promise for all. It remained to be seen how that promise would be met, as schools faced the enormous challenges of the twentieth century (Mondale & Patton, 2001).

In 1900's, Americans celebrated their tax-supported schools as a symbol of the nation's democratic promise that all girls and boys could improve themselves in accordance with their talents and efforts. Public schools were treasured public institutions, but most children left school by the end of eighth grade to help at home or go to work. The emphasis was on the three R's: reading, writing, and arithmetic. State departments of education had few employees and no control over local school boards, and federal education officials did little more than collect and disseminate statistics about education (Ravitch, 2001). During this time school reformers successfully centralized and bureaucratized school administration, and put expert professionals in control of the school while limiting the involvement of laypersons and parents. The reformers advocated industrial and vocational education which targeted immigrant children. Junior high schools were created in order to begin job training. Congress enacted a federal program to aid vocational education in 1917. Due to the dramatic growth in enrollments, new ways were created to educate students, especially the children from immigrant and working-class families whose English was poor or unsuited for traditional academic courses. Experts recommended differentiation of the

curriculum into multiple vocational tracks for children who were expected to become industrial and commercial workers, domestic workers, and housewives.

After 1917, there were no major education reform events in education until complaints started about the quality of education in the public schools. Critics blamed the schools' failure on education professionals. The charges and countercharges would eventually die down, but when the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, Congress in 1957 responded by passing the National Education Defense Act in 1958 (Ravitch, 2001). Massive amounts of federal money (over \$100 million annually) were spent to aid public education (Mondale & Patton, 2001).

To ensure equal education for all of America's children, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed by President Johnson. It banned discrimination on the basis of race in all federally funded programs, including schools, due in part to the desegregation decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education* (Anderson, 2001). President Johnson believed that an equal chance at education meant an equal chance at life, so he introduced the threat of losing federal funds for states not in compliance with *Brown v. the Board of Education*. Congress also enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which increased the amount of federal funds for schools (Mondale & Patton, 2001). This represented a new commitment of the federal government to the public schooling of young people.

The grassroots school reform movements of the 1960's spilled over into the 1970's. The movement for instruction in a language other than English received a boost from the U. S. Supreme Court (*Lau v. Nichols*) when Chinese Americans in California

sued successfully for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Feminist leaders pushed for laws and programs to give women educational equity. In 1972 Congress passed Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments Act, which prohibited the awarding of federal monies to programs that discriminated on the basis of gender. In 1976, the crusade for equal educational opportunity embraced children with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Free Appropriate Public Education Act).

Fearing foreign competition in the 1980's, business-led coalitions pressured schools to develop an efficient workforce that would give American business trade a global advantage and ultimately fuel prosperity (Cuban, 2001). Some business leaders believed that schools should be modeled after the economics of the marketplace. Business involvement in U. S. public schools was influential in changing schools' educational goals, governance, management, organization, and curriculum.

In 1983 a presidential commission of corporate, public and educational leaders assessed the public schools. The results were published in *A Nation At Risk*. As a result of the recommendations in the report, states increased high school graduation requirements, lengthened the school year, and added more tests (Cuban, 2001). In 1989, President George H. W. Bush convened the state governors to discuss education and how to address the results published in the study. Throughout the 1990's states mandated curricular and performance standards, new tests, and accountability through testing of principals, teachers, and students (Mondale & Patton, 2001). Corporate leaders claimed they had strategies like Total Quality Management (TQM) and Human

Resource Management Systems that could revolutionize public schooling. These strategies had worked for the Ford Motor Company, IBM, Xerox, Hewlett-Packard, and scores of other firms (Cuban, 2001). Using these corporate-based methods, schools developed outcome measures, such as standardized tests given at the end of the year, which determine what has been learned, and roughly predict how students will perform in the future.

President Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994, and thus, the federal government entered the battle over school reform. Soon afterward Congress passed a complementary reform program, the School-to Work Opportunities Act, which supported the Goals 2000 bill by providing an alternative way for states to change the structure of high schools and move students toward achieving the high academic standards proposed in Goals 2000 (Kaestle, 2001). This “standards-based” reform focused on teaching and learning as the core activity in schools, instead of concentrating on such piecemeal approaches as site-based management or choice programs. The starting point of standards-based reform was agreement on what should be taught and what should be learned. The different components of schooling such as assessment, teacher training, textbooks were aligned with course objectives to achieve the high academic standards proposed in Goals 2000. The legislation also mandated the alignment of federal aid to the target objectives of the educational programs to be in compliance with Goals 2000. The agreement between the federal and state legislation was that the federal government would help, not hinder, the states. Each state would develop its own individual plan to raise educational standards (Kaestle, 2001). The

difference between this and previous legislation was that Goals 2000 established the framework for the federal government's involvement in school reform; the other bills helped to complete the framework. The federal government not only entered the school reform effort but changed major programs by funding and supporting them. In October of 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With this passage Congress reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the principal federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. In amending the ESEA, the new law represented a sweeping overhaul of federal efforts to support elementary and secondary education in the United States (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was designed to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. Passed with overwhelming, bipartisan support in Congress, the law was signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. President Bush expressed that too many of our neediest children are being left behind (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). NCLB was built on four "common-sense" pillars: accountability for results, emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research, expanded parental options, and expanded local control and flexibility (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). The law specified that parents should be provided more information about their child's progress. Under NCLB, by the 2005-06 school year each state would measure every public school student's progress in reading and math yearly in grades 3 - 8 and at least once during grades 10 through 12. By school year 2007-08, assessments in science for grades 3-5, 6-8, and 10-12 would be

underway. These assessments would be aligned with academic content and achievement standards, and provide parents with objective data about their child's academic strengths and weaknesses. This data includes information on student achievement by race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status, and provides information about the professional qualifications of teachers. (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). To increase parental involvement, new options were given if the school students attended was in need of improvement. In the first year that a school was considered to be in need of improvement, parents could transfer their child to a "higher-performing" public school, including a charter school, within their district. Transportation would be provided to the new school, subject to certain cost limitations. (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

In the 1700's, beginning school systems were governed by local school committees with complete authority. These committees were not subjected to any regulation from the states agency. However by the 1900's, states began to make more regulations while funneling federal and state monies to the local schools. In 1965 the first threat of losing federal funds due to non-compliance was introduced. This took away some power from the local and state educational entities. In the 1980's, standards-based reform encouraged individual states to align their standards to the federal legislations, again decreasing the amount of authority of the local school districts. The mandates from No Child Left Behind increased the amount of regulatory power the federal and state entities have on local school districts. With the decrease of authority on the local level, the struggle for power moved to the school board and superintendent.

The Historical Development of School Boards

A local school board is a collection of people who are democratically elected as representatives of the community. They are charged to develop policies and oversee the operation of the district. Leipold (1945) identified three periods of development for school boards. The first period occurred during the seventeenth-century; civic authorities had complete control of school affairs and exercised their authority through the voters at town meetings or through their elected selectmen. The second period encompassed the eighteenth-century; the control of the schools became a delegated function of committees that were appointed by the selectmen or by people who attended the town meetings. Finally, from the nineteenth-century to the present, the school board has been an independent body, responsible to the people who elected them to office.

School boards were established due to the efforts of Horace Mann to make public schools nonsectarian (Goldhammer, 1967; Wiles & Bondi, 1985). Massachusetts was responsible for two major legal actions that contributed to the advancement of local boards of education (Canada, 1989). In 1789, Massachusetts enacted a law requiring every town to have a committee to oversee schools, and in 1826, the state, in a move toward local independence, required each town to establish independent school committee to govern the schools. During this time local school boards controlled every aspect of education, including collecting taxes, hiring and managing teachers, managing facilities, and testing students. (Usdan, McCloud, Podmostko, & Cuban, 2001; Workman, 2003). In 1837, Massachusetts established the first state board of education to give the state a greater role in education; however, local school boards retained most

of the control over their schools (Danzberger, 1994; Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Workman, 2003).

As school boards became more independent of municipal government and more controlled by the community, governance became centralized locally with elected boards of lay citizens. However, the corruption of local school boards led to major reform of school governance, with a central board balanced by a professional executive. The professional executive, also known as the superintendent, ran the schools on a day-to-day basis and implemented board policy (Danzberger, 1994; Workman, 2003). Reform spread rapidly, due to the efforts of the National Education Association, which at the time was primarily comprised of school administrators (Kirst, 1994). A nationwide reform addressed issues such as decentralization, expertise, professionalism, nonpolitical control and efficiency. Corporate boards which were designed to focus on policy rather than on daily administration were the new model for school boards. The role of the superintendent became more managerial, instructional and professional (Danzberger et al., 1992).

Campbell and Greene (1994) state that effective board members possess common characteristics. These characteristics are listed as follows:

1. A clear understanding of their duties and of their central, powerful role of providing leadership to ensure a quality education.
2. An understanding of the importance of teamwork. Knowing that progress can only be made by the board as a whole and that no one member has any authority outside the governance team.
3. An adoption of a positive attitude when conducting business.

4. An understanding, appreciation, and respect for the superintendent and his/her role, the district staff, and all other members of the community.
5. Has established an environment of trust with the board and the district.
6. Has established an accountability system that enables the board to concentrate on outcomes, not methods or procedures.
7. An understanding of the importance of open and honest communication.
8. Carry out their responsibilities with a high level of professionalism. Knowing that their behavior sets the tone for the district.
9. An understanding that fairness, stability, and consistency promote trust and harmony.

Flores (2001) explains certain behaviors exhibited by effective and less effective school board members. The most effective board members exhibited the following behaviors:

1. The ability to distinguish between policy and administration.
2. The willingness to ensure the superintendent the opportunity to make a recommendation on policy issues.
3. The insistence on policies that are sensitive to public need.

Behaviors exhibited by least effective board members are:

1. Do not seek knowledge of state and federal laws affecting education.
2. Do not distinguish between policy making and administering.
3. Do not display consistency in policy implementation.

The study made suggestions for improvement of the school board effectiveness.

The following are the three main suggestions for improvement:

1. Clarify policy and administrative responsibilities.
2. Require in-service training on effective school board service.
3. Increase longevity of service for board members.

The role of the school board according to Rogers (2003) is to set the mission and goals for the school district, design policies to attain the mission and goals, hire the superintendent, delegate the duties for carrying out policy, and to evaluate the missions, goals, policies, and the superintendent. The role of the school board changed from total and complete power over the school district to the five duties listed above.

The board emerged as a small group of lay people, elected or appointed, who had local control in order to better understand the needs of the community, who focused primarily on policymaking, and who relied on a chief executive officer (superintendent) for administration of those policies (Edward, 1999; Good, 1998; Workman, 2003). The debate over the need for effectiveness of local boards resulted in federal mandates, state and mayoral takeover of school districts, the initiation of site-based decision-making at the school level, the development of a new reform of charter schools, and the ongoing call for fiscal reform through vouchers (Timar & Tyack, 1999; Workman, 2003; Ziebarth, 2002a, 2002b).

The Historical Development of Superintendents

The growth in the number of communities establishing public schools resulted in an additional level of local control. This created the first state superintendent of schools in New York (Carter & Cunningham, 1999; Glass, Bjork & Brunner, 2000; Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Kowalski, 1999; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1996). With the exception of Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnard in Connecticut, state superintendents had little educational influence (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990). As the population of United States increased, hundreds of small local school systems were

born. The task of overseeing these local school systems became impossible for a single state school officer or committee. The responsibilities were then shifted to area committees. These committees would soon become county committees, resulting in a superintendent as the lead person (Flores, 2001). The position of public school superintendent had not existed until the 1820's (Workman, 2003). The role of the superintendent was to handle the daily operations of a number of schools (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Prior to this, they served mostly as clerks or administrative secretaries to the boards (Owen & Ovando, 2000). The local committees were reluctant to turn the supervision of the school over to one individual (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). By 1900 all major cities had school superintendents because school administration became so complex, the superintendents assumed administrative duties that were previously performed by the board.

Reform efforts also changed the role and/or definition of the superintendent. During the first half of the twentieth century, the superintendent's role could be defined as bonds, budgets, buses, and building (commonly referred to as buses and beans because of reform efforts). By the 1970's, the position became concerned with race, resources, relationships, and roles. Duties such as public relations, staff development, transportation, personnel, etc. can be delegated to other staff members, however, it is the superintendent's responsibility to ensure that successful implementation of the duties (Flores, 2001). In addition to the responsibilities and duties listed above the superintendent is responsible for the following:

1. Leading the public school system and the community and to develop the present and long-term plans for the program of public education in the school district.
2. Advising the board on the formulation of policies for the governance of the school system and to execute the policies subsequently adopted by the board.
3. Planning the comprehensive effort for the school district.
4. Serving as “clerk” of the school board and prepare complete and accurate records and board activities.
5. Notifying the board members of all regular, adjourned and special meetings.
6. Attending all meetings of the school board. Except at the request of the board, the superintendent is not generally present at any board meeting convened to discuss the superintendent’s salary or tenure.
7. Interpreting board policy and developing administrative regulations for policy implementation.
8. Establishing and maintaining an organizational system with clearly defined lines of authority and responsibility for all school staff.
9. Recruiting, selecting, and assigning the employees for the district.
10. Developing and implementing regulations that will prohibit discriminatory action by employees or other persons acting in the name of the school district. Such discriminatory actions may be defined as any prohibited action that would cause employees or other persons to be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, and employment opportunity.
11. Carrying out the following specific, but not exhaustive duties:
 - a. Supervising instruction, controlling and managing pupils, formulate the curricula and developing courses that shall be subject to the approval of the board.
 - b. Preparing the annual budget and submit to the school board for approval.
 - c. Supervising school buildings, grounds, and equipment.
 - d. Recommending and executing plans for repairs and renovations of all school property and for new construction.

- e. Representing the school board as principal negotiator in collective bargaining with any bargaining group that has been recognized or certified. The superintendent shall select the bargaining team and assign duties to the members of the team. The superintendent shall negotiate on behalf on the school board, however, no agreement is valid or binding unless adopted by the board.
- f. Receiving, hearing, and adjudicating complaints against the school in other matter of school controversy involving school district employees, pupils, and parents of students or patrons.
- g. Receiving reports from agencies like the auditor, the Fire Department, and the Texas Education Agency, and informing the board of the action taken pursuant to recommendations made in these reports.
- h. Enforcing compulsory attendance laws.
- i. Assigning and transferring employees of the district.
- j. Suspending school employees at any time, until the next board meeting,
- k. Recommending textbooks and other instructional materials, instructional supplies, and school equipment for adoption or approval by the board.
- l. Delegating to subordinates any of the powers and duties that the board has entrusted to the superintendent, however, the superintendent will continue to be responsible and accountable to the board for the execution of the powers and duties delegated (Candoli, Cullen, & Studdlebeam, 1997).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and The National School Boards Association (NSBA) (1994) developed the general professional standards for superintendents. According to these standards, effective superintendents should be able to demonstrate competencies and skills related to each of the following six standards:

Standard 1: Leadership and District Culture. Demonstrate executive leadership by developing a collective district vision.

Standard 2: Policy and Governance. Develop procedures for working with the board that define mutual expectations, working relationships and strategies for formulating district policy.

Standard 3: Curriculum Planning and Development. Design curriculum and a strategic plan that enhance teaching and learning in multiple contexts.

Standard 4: Instructional Management. Exhibit knowledge of instructional management by implementing a system that includes research findings on learning and instructional strategies.

Standard 5: Human Resources Management. Develop a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members.

Standard 6: Values and Ethics of Leadership. Understand and model appropriate value systems, ethics, and moral leadership (Hoyle, 1992).

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, the role of superintendents can be defined as academic standards, accountability, autonomy, ambiguity and the five C's of collaboration, connection, communication, child advocacy, and community building (Usdan et al., 2001; Workman, 2003).

The Historical Development of Texas Public School System

On January 31, 1854, Texas Governor Elisha M. Pease signed a law creating the first public school system, which also created the Texas Permanent School Fund. By 1875 independent school districts were created, which authorized any incorporated city to provide education for all children residing within its limits. In 1866, the Texas Constitution advanced education by legalizing the appointment of a state superintendent of public instruction. The Constitution of 1866 provided the framework for centralizing

Texas' public school system. It vested the statewide power for all public schools in a state superintendent who was appointed by the governor. The State Board of Education consisted of the governor, comptroller, and the state superintendent. Independent school districts were created in 1875. The Constitution of 1876 abolished the state superintendent of public instruction; however, in 1884, the state superintendent was restored for an elected term of two years (Texas Education Agency, 2004)

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, the Texas' public school system developed and increased in size. County boards of education were established by the passage of the Rural High School Law, which permitted the creation of rural high schools and the consolidation of common school districts. In 1923 laymen were appointed to serve on the State Board of Education. By 1928, a Constitutional amendment passed which changed the composition of the State Board of Education from nine elected members to nine members appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate. The next major change in the Texas public education system did not occur until 1949. The Gilmer Aikin law created the Texas Education Agency. The existing State Board of Education was changed to a board of 21 members elected by popular vote. This law also changed the name of the state superintendent of public instruction to the state commissioner whom the State Board of Education appointed for a term of four years. Twenty regional service centers were founded to give aid and support in the form of regional media lending, libraries and resource centers for instructional materials (Texas Education Agency, 2004). House Bill 1126 provided the first state compensatory

fund. Senate Bill 1 increased school district funding in 1977 (Texas Education Agency, 2004).

In 1984, an advisory committee was appointed to draft Statewide Standards on the Duties of a School Board Member in compliance with the requirements for training of local school board members.

The 1990's brought many changes to the Texas public school system. In 1990 the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test was given for the first time, replacing Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills. During May of the same year, the State's Site-Based Decision Making, Advisory Committee, and Texas Educational Agency were assisting in implementing local school districts' site-based decision-making team. Senate Bill 1 increased local control and provided opportunities for local ownership of the educational process (Texas Education Agency, 2004).

National Guidelines for School Boards and Superintendents

The American Association of School Administration and the National School Board Association developed specific responsibilities for school boards and superintendents due to the pulling in opposite directions by each side. They believed working together to develop and publish guidelines for each group would help to create a positive and productive relationship. The following guidelines were developed for school boards;

1. To work with the superintendent and the community to develop a vision for the schools.
2. To establish a structure and create an environment that will help the school systems achieve its vision.

3. To develop academic standards based on high expectations and an assessment system to measure academic performance toward the achievement of such standards, so that the school board can be accountable to the people of the community.
4. To formulate strategies to help students who are not performing up to standards attain their maximum potentials.
5. To engage in advocacy on behalf of students and their school and promote the benefits of a public education system to the community.
6. To support the superintendent in all decisions that conform to board policy, recognized professional standards, and other decisions made by the board.
7. To hold the superintendent responsible and accountable for the administration of the schools through regular, constructive, written and oral evaluations of the superintendent's work. Performance evaluation is an ongoing effort and should be linked to goals established by the board with the advice and counsel of the superintendent.
8. To provide the superintendent with a comprehensive employment contract.
9. To provide fair and adequate compensation that will attract and retain excellent people in all circumstances.
10. To give the superintendent the benefit of individual board member's expertise, familiarity with the local school system, and community interests.
11. To hold all board meetings with superintendent or a designee present.
12. To consult with the superintendent on all matters.
13. To develop a plan for the board-superintendent communications.
14. To channel communications with school employees through the superintendent, especially if any action is suggested, and refer all applications, complaints, and other communication, oral or written, first to the superintendent.
15. To take action on matters only after hearing the recommendation of the superintendent.

16. To include in board policies a specific policy on the effective management of complaints against district personnel.
17. To provide the superintendent with administrative assistance, especially in the area of monitoring teaching and learning.
18. To exercise continued oversight of all educational programs.
19. To work closely, where appropriate, with other governmental agencies and bodies.
20. To collaborate with other school boards through state and national school board associations to let state legislators, members of Congress, and all other appropriate state and federal official know of local concerns and issues.
21. To mandate and provide resources for high quality board and professional development programs using qualified trainers that will enable school leaders to have the knowledge and skills needed to provide excellent policy leadership for the school system. In some cases, boards and superintendents should engage in joint training.
22. To provide for self-evaluation of the board's own effectiveness in meeting its stated goals and performing its role in public school governance.
23. To establish a periodic review of all school board policies for current relevance and necessity to ensure student needs are being appropriately served.
24. To work to ensure that the district has the necessary funds and that a balance is maintained between needs and resources in the distribution of available monies.
25. To delegate to the superintendent responsibilities for all administrative functions, except those specifically reserved to the board's presiding officer through board policy.
26. To ensure board members understand that, under law, the school board acts as a board and that individual board members have no independent authority (pp.8-10).

To maintain the balance of this effort, superintendents were assigned following responsibilities;

1. To serve as the school board's chief executive officer and preeminent educational adviser in all efforts of the board to fulfill its school system governance role.
2. To serve as the primary educational leader for the school system and chief administrative officer of the entire school district's professional and support staff, including staff members assigned to provide support service to the board.
3. To serve as a catalyst for the school system's administrative leadership team in proposing and implementing policy changes.
4. To propose and institute a process for long-range and strategic planning that will engage the board and the community in positioning the school district for success in ensuring years.
5. To keep all board members informed about school operation and programs.
6. To interpret the needs of the school district to the board.
7. To present policy options along with specific recommendations to the board when circumstances require the board to adopt new policies or review existing policies.
8. To develop and inform the board of administrative procedures needed to implement board policy.
9. To develop a sound program of school/community relations in concert with the board.
10. To oversee management of the district's day-to-day operations.
11. To develop a description for the board of what constitutes effective leadership and management of public schools, taking into account that effective leadership and management are the result of effective governance and effective administration combined.
12. To develop and carry out a plan for keeping the total professional and support staff informed about the mission, goals, and strategies of the school system and about the importance of role staff members play in achieving them.

13. To ensure that professional development opportunities are available to all school system employees.
14. To collaborate with other administrators through national and state professional associations to inform state legislators, members of Congress, and all other appropriate state and federal officials of local concerns and issues.
15. To ensure that the school system provides equal opportunity for all students.
16. To evaluate personnel performance in harmony with district policy and to keep the board informed about such evaluations.
17. To provide all board members with complete background information and a recommendation for school board action on each agenda item well in advance of each board meeting.
18. To develop and implement a continuing plan for working with the news media (Texas Education Agency, 2005).

Texas Guidelines for School Board Members and Superintendents

The state of Texas developed professional standards as the basis for superintendent certification as well as the performance domains for the annual superintendent evaluation conducted by the school board (Texas Education Agency, 2005).

The Texas Education Code 11.201 (Texas Education Agency, 2005) defines the superintendent as the educational leader and the chief executive officer of a school district. The following actions are specific duties of the superintendent in the State of Texas and include:

1. Assuming administrative responsibility and leadership for the planning operation, supervision and evaluation of the education programs, services and

facilities of the district and for the annual performance appraisal of the district staff.

2. Assuming administrative responsibility for the assignment and evaluation of all personnel of the district other than the superintendent.
3. Making recommendations regarding the selection of personnel of the district other than the superintendent.
4. Initiating the termination or suspension of an employee or the nonrenewal of an employee's term contract.
5. Managing the day-to-day operation of the district as its administrative manager.
6. Preparing and submitting to the board of trustees a proposed budget;
7. Preparing recommendations for policies to be adopted by the board of trustees and overseeing the implementation of adopted policies.
8. Developing or causing to be developed appropriate administrative regulations to implement policies established by the board of trustees.
9. Providing leadership for the attainment of student performance in the district based on the indicators adopted by the State Board of Education or the district's board of trustees;
10. Organizing the district's central administration; and
11. Performing any other duties assigned by action of the board of trustees (Texas Education Agency, 2005).

As the microscopic examination of public education continues and schools are held accountable for results, the role of the superintendent is more challenging.

Superintendents must maintain a positive relationship with their boards to achieve the goals and objectives of the district and to maintain their position. Since the beginning of school boards and superintendent, the struggle for power has been a central historical theme. The shifting of roles has for the most part taken the control of the district from a group of elected individuals to an individual appointed by the elected group. Because of

the shifting of power, more people are running for school board positions because of dissatisfaction with the school district and with no knowledge of board or superintendent's function or role, the superintendent has the additional duty of balancing the emotional and personal agendas of each board member. Superintendents are also charged with assisting school board members in obtaining appropriate training. If the roles and duties of the school board and superintendent are not understood and properly delegated, then conflict may arise.

School Board and Superintendent Relationship

Historical reviews of board-and-superintendent development demonstrate that school boards had total control of running the daily operations of the school districts before superintendents ever appeared on the educational scene (Hoyle, English & Steffy, 1998). The superintendent's duties were carved from the board's overall responsibilities. The roles of school boards and superintendents have undergone many changes throughout the years, which blurred lines and tension between the two (Wright, 2002). A dividing line was drawn that gave boards the power to determine policies and superintendents the responsibility for executing these same policies (Flores, 2001).

School boards have drawn criticism for micromanagement and encroachment upon the administrator's role (Danzberger & Usdan, 1994) and for their inability to work collaboratively with their superintendents (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Renchler, 2000). This inability to work together can hinder the board from performing their important functions of policy review, formulation, and adoption. Ramirez (1995) determined five important stages to policy development

which are hindered if the board and superintendent relationship is not positive and productive. The five stages of policy development were given as the following:

1. Identify issues. Instead of waiting for issues to present themselves, the board should systematically scan the environment to discern positive or negative issues or trends.
2. Set priorities. Once the board has identified an issue or trend, determine where it fits in the district's structure.
3. Analyze and study. Determine the best possible solution to address the issue or trend.
4. Take action. Decide to add, change, or to leave the issue or trend the same.
5. Follow through. Determine methods to assess the effectiveness of the decision.

The relationship between the school board and superintendent remains one of the most frequently cited critical challenges for school districts (Blumberg, 1985; Grady & Bryant, 1991; Grogan, 2000; Henkin, 1993; Lindle, Miller & Lagana, 1992; McCloud & Mackenzie, 1994; Ornstein, 1991; Tallerico, 1994; Zlotkin, 1993). The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Board Association (NSBA) (1994) state that in order for our nation to continue to prosper, the constant improvement of public education is essential. Strong collaborative leadership from school boards and superintendents must be a driving force in dealing with the direct and indirect effects of the great changes and challenges facing society and our nation's schools. Neither board members nor superintendents can operate effectively without a thorough knowledge and support of their respective roles.

A productive relationship between the school board and superintendent is a requirement for a district to be effective. The school board president and the superintendent are the main actors in developing a positive relationship. Basom, Young, and Adams (1999) reported five strategies for building and maintaining positive and trusting school board and superintendent relationships: trust, focus, communications, superintendent as teacher, and politics. These strategies were developed from their research on superintendents. Trust was the most important theme in the school board and superintendent relationship. According to Canada (1989), once trust was lost, as perceived by the school board members, it could not be regained. Focus was defined as establishing a real strategic plan with core values and a sense of vision (Flores, 2001). Canada (1989) also concluded that a failure in the school board and superintendent relationship was seldom due to technical incompetence, but rather due to matters of equitable treatment and openness between the school board and superintendent.

Studies of the school board and superintendent relationship conclude that communication, trust, and understanding role differences influence their effectiveness or lack of it (Basom, Young, & Adams, 1999; Canada, 1989; Flores, 2001). To achieve a healthy relationship, the school board and superintendent must work together towards this development. Wright (2002) cited a lack of communication as one of the reasons why superintendents across the country face a short tenure, which is currently an average three years in a single position. School boards expect the superintendent to be an effective communicator. In turn, the superintendent expects communication from the school board. Moreover, effective communication is also the ability to translate the

needs of the district to the public and maintain a positive relationship with the media (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990).

Waggoner (1991) found that there is a strong need to provide effective training models for board members and superintendents. The National School Board Association (NSBA) attempted to clarify the roles of the board and superintendent; however, this attempt created more confusion than expected from school boards (Stephens, 1993). To clear the confusion, the AASA along with NSBA created a joint committee. The committee identified three major factors that influence the school board and superintendent relationship.

1. The nature of policy and development and administration - the superintendent's key role was to serve as a professional adviser to the school board.
2. The increasing influence of external factors on local school district governance- legislative mandates often allow no latitude for anyone in the local school district to alter detailed rules in implementing new laws or mandated curricula.
3. The discretionary authority boards grant their chief administrators- the board, by law, generally is responsible for all school programs and operations. (1994 p. 6)

Research has indicated that role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities can hinder the relationship between the school board and superintendent (Allison, 1991; Allison, Allison, & McHenry, 1995; Education Commission of the United States, 1999, National School Board Association, 1996; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2002). However, training in these areas has shown to decrease role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities (Smoley, 1999). This relationship is a key component for achievement of federal and state mandates and the goals and objectives of the school district.

Many researchers have attempted to describe and define the characteristics, methods, strategies, competencies, and keys of what an ideal board and superintendent relationship resembles. A positive relationship was one of the key components of an ideal board (Danzberger et al., 1992; Eadie, 2003). Fulbright and Goodman (1999) conducted a study based on interviews with educators and citizens in five states: Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon and Texas. The results led to the recommendation of ten ways in which effective governance teams can be created and maintained. These governance teams exhibited a “we are all in this together” attitude. This attitude made the board and superintendent focus on what mattered the most: the children and their improved academics. When the board and superintendent worked together as an effective team, the superintendent had the necessary support and was able to focus on accomplishing the school district’s goals and objectives. Further, the community was less likely to disrupt the board and superintendent relationship, and the climate of the entire district improved. Fulbright and Goodman (1999) recommended ten concepts for creating and maintaining an effective board. The first is to establish a firm foundation for teamwork. The relationship between the board and superintendent is only as strong as the foundation on which it is built. Second, the board and superintendent must have a clear and precise vision, a system of accountability, and an advocacy of student and school needs. Third, is to nurture mutual respect and support. Fourth, trust between superintendent and the board is a critical foundation component. The best way to establish trust is for the board and superintendent to spend quality time together. Fifth, those involved need to follow a process, be flexible about division of

responsibilities, and be a team player. Sixth, the best superintendents regard every board member as a learner and take time for team development. They avoid surprises by adhering to guidelines, providing a precise agenda and preparing for board meetings by not filling meetings with lengthy reports. When school boards and superintendents learn how to deal with conflict and recognize it as potential for growth, the relationship between them can continue to be positive (Fulbright & Goodman, 1999).

Social Action System Theory

The methodology for this study is based on the organizational theory of Talcott Parsons' social action system (Black, 1961). The social action theory developed in essentially three different traditions, each committed to apparently conflicting notions about the nature of man, society and human behavior, and the scientific method. In Parsons' (Black, 1961), view each of these traditions had grasped part of the truth, but not all of it. Each had successfully developed various special theories; however, none alone provided an adequate basis for a general theory of social action. Parsons believed his task was to reconcile and integrate the traditions and the features of the system. Social action system theory is interested in human behavior and the response to the action (conflict). This theory is based upon the premise that there are many broad areas of human conduct that properly qualify the action (conflict). These conducts are the kinds of behaviors that concern the sociologist (Devereux, 1961). Social action system theory is parallel to the nature/nurture in regards to developing the individual.

Using the social perspectives, Hollingshead, Wittenbaum, Paulus, Hirokawa, Ancona, Peterson, Jehn and Yoon, (2005) identify four characteristics commonly used in studying group behaviors:

1. Groups are goal oriented
2. Group behavior and performance vary and can be evaluated.
3. Interaction processes have utility and can be regulated.
4. Internal and external factors influence group performance via interaction. (p. 23)

According to Black (1961), Parsons believed that conflict is common in any relationship. Coser (1956) says that in organizations or groups, conflict is seen as performance of organizations or groups maintaining function. In order for the group to work as a system all involved need to feel that they are a valued part of the team. When value does not exist, then conflict can arise. Conflict can be a mechanism through which adjustment and change can be brought about which, in turn, regulates the system. Coser adds that the smaller the organization or group, the easier it is for mutual irritation and anger to flare, causing conflict.

When interaction occurs between two or more individuals, the conflict can manifest as a means by itself or as an end in itself. Conflict can be divided into realistic and non-realistic conflict. Conflict which arises from frustration of specific demands within the relationship and from estimates of gains of the participants, and which are directed at the presumed frustrating object can be called realistic conflicts, insofar as they are means toward a specific result. Non-realistic conflicts are occasioned not by the rival ends of the antagonists, but by the need for tension release of at least one of them (Coser, 1956).

Parsons' definition of organizations makes them appear to epitomize the two problems faced by social systems in which he was most interested: problems which are known as the dilemma of freedom versus order in the elegant but cryptic language of social philosophy. Formal organizations contain subunits (individuals, departments and functions, occupational groups), and organizations can in turn be thought of as subunits of larger systems (such as the educational system or the economy). Second, activities in formal organizations are clearly motivated toward the achievement of goals. Finally, organizations have explicit mechanisms for solving problems of how to maintain their identity vis-à-vis their environment by maintaining whatever patterns of internal relationships they have established while at the same time obtaining from the environment the support they need for survival (Landsberger, 1961).

When researching organization or groups, Parsons believed that patterns or choices are made by individuals based on what is important to that individual. These choices are applied only to a single individual; however, the actions and responses from an individual can change the dynamics of the entire group. The underlying premise of this theory is that the group is made up of people with their own agendas and experiences. These people are viewed as goal seeking and possess alternative means to achieve the group goal(s). Each individual has his/her own variety of situational conditions, such as their own biological makeup and heredity, as well as various external goals and wealth. The individual is also governed by their own values, norms and other ideas that influence the type of goals and how to achieve them. Each individual makes subjective decisions on how to achieve the group's goals; however they are constrained

by ideas, situations, and conditions (Crotty, 2003). The following are Parsons' concept of individual interactions within the group. First, adaptation- the individual obtains sufficient resources from the environment and distributes the resources throughout the system. Second, goal attainment – the individual establishes priorities among the goals of the system and then mobilizes the system's resources for their attainment. Third, integration – the individual coordinates and maintains viable interrelationships among the system's units.

Parsons, as cited by Black (1961), insists that the patterns are dichotomies and not on a continuum and they are not to be applied to the group, but to the individual. There are two mutual and exclusive responses that an individual faces when confronted with a stimulus. When an individual is choosing which response to make, this is called the dilemma of choice. Once the individual makes a choice, then conflict may enter the group (Black, 1961).

Social action theory is concerned with complex systems, which are characterized by a highly generalized universalistic normative structure. The universalistic normative structures are based on the levels of authority within a group. The individual's authority corresponds with his position in the group. The individuals' position gives them the autonomy to pursue individual goals and interests rather than the groups'. This autonomy may give the individual the ability to influence the other members to support their goals and interests. Because of the influence of an individual on other group members, the groups' goals and interests may not be accomplished (Hacker, 1961). It is relevant to understand how conflict enters in and what part it plays in the relationship

within the group. By studying organizations and groups a clearer understanding of how the organization or group, individual, types of conflict and the outcomes from the conflict affect the structure of the organization or group.

Table 1 explains the five choices an individual can make when faced with a dilemma. According to Parsons the five pattern variables formulate five fundamental choices that must be made by an individual when confronted with a situation (Black, 1961). Each variable chosen by an individual is based on that individual's heredity, experience, and background. Parsons also believes the fifth dilemma (diffuseness-specificity) is obviously a matter of degree of how much the individual allows himself to be involved with the object or group.

Table 1: Parsons' Pattern Variables

Choices		
1. affectivity to get immediate gratification	or	affective neutrality to exercise self-restraint in the light of long-term considerations
2. self-orientation to serve self-interest	or	collective-orientation to serve the interest of a group to which one belongs
3. transcendence to treat an object or another person as falling under some general principle in which there is no reference to oneself	or	immanence to take account of the particular relations in which the object person stands in relation to oneself
4. ascription to treat an object or another person in the light of "what it is" (its supposed qualities)	or	achievement to treat it or him in the light what it or he may be expected to be
5. diffuseness to respond to many aspects of the object or person	or	specificity to respond to some selection of those aspects

Summary

The review of literature demonstrated a chronological view of the development of the public school system: school boards to the birth of the superintendent on a national and state level. The fight for authority and control has increased between the school board and superintendent as the roles of the board and superintendent changed. One of the reasons for this fight for authority and control, according to Ondrovich (1997) is the blurred line between the roles of the school board and superintendent. The literature, according to Glass, Bjork and Brunner (2000), suggests that without clear lines of demarcation between the roles of school boards and superintendents, tension becomes a part of daily living.

Beginning in the 1980's increased attention has labeled public schools as being ineffective. As a result of this shift in the perception of school boards and superintendents' effectiveness, many individuals have been elected to school boards for the purpose of revitalizing schools (Wright, 2002). With the demand for high stakes standards and accountability from NCLB, the school board and superintendent need to work together to ensure the academic achievement of all students. To achieve this goal, it is imperative school boards and superintendents learn how to minimize conflict so the students of their district will not be harmed by the fluctuations of their relationship. The literature revealed that the development of a positive relationship between the school board and the superintendent is needed to improve school districts (Canada, 1989).

The relationship between the school board and superintendent should be a concern for all involved. The development of this relationship is critical to achieving the

goals and objectives of the district. By examining the relationship between school board members and the superintendent, this research seeks the factors that contributed to the conflict and what, if any, might have helped to resolve them. Using Parsons' social action theory which describes the dilemma of choices, these choices can be used to identify sources of conflict. This study is designed to report the school board members' and the superintendent's perceptions of what caused the conflict and what could help to improve their relationship. The following chapter describes on the methodology utilized in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research design, method, and procedures for this study. It includes the restatement of the purpose, research questions, design of the study, description of sample, instrumentation and procedure for analysis of data.

School boards and superintendents have governance responsibilities over the public schools in Texas. A positive relationship between the school board and the superintendent is imperative to achieve the academic success mandated by the federal and state agencies. The importance for school districts addressing the academic performance of all students has become more critical than ever, with the high-stake mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act. In order for the state of Texas to ensure that all students have access to an equal quality education, Texas has implemented the Academic Excellence Indicator System which is a complex and detailed accountability system that presents immediate performance results of the school district and each individual campus (Texas Education Agency, 2005). This accountability system was designed to provide campus and district ratings for all Texas public schools and school districts. The four features rating systems are based upon the performance level of three base indicators: student performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), attendance rates, and dropout rates.

Due to the emphasis on student performance, school districts are now focusing on improving academic performance of all students. Nevertheless, it has become noticeable that some districts have improved results, while other districts are still addressing the issues. In consideration of the evidence (Allison et al., 1995; Basom et al., 1999; Canada, 1989; Danzeberg et al., 1994; Edwards, 1999; Estes, 1979;) there remains a crucial need to understand the type of relationship that exists between the school boards and the superintendents. Specifically this research addressed the following questions:

1. What type of group interactions occurred among the school board members, and between the board and the superintendent?
2. How did board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent?
3. In what ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence board/superintendent cohesiveness?
4. In what ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on board/superintendent cohesiveness?

Research Design

Qualitative research uses the natural setting to gather data; this allowed the researcher to be the key instrument. The data were in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The researcher was concerned with the process as well as the outcomes. The data were analyzed inductively. The essential concern to the qualitative

approach was “meaning.” The researcher was interested in the different ways people make sense out of their roles (participant perspective) (Bailey, 1994).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) detail the uniqueness of qualitative research as: the researcher starts with a focus but understands that the focus may change. The theory emerged from a central theme or naturalistic inquiry. The instrumentation was not external (objective), but internal (subjective). Data analysis was open and inductive, in contrast to focused and deductive analysis, which is common in conventional inquiry. Trustworthiness was established by the use of techniques that provide truth-value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through conformability.

The researcher selected a case study design because of the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked. Qualitative case studies focus on holistic descriptions that give explanations because they are anchored in real-life situations. Qualitative case studies also offer insight that expand the readers’ experiences; case study helps structure future research. Due to the complexities underlying human behavior (such as values, actions, relationships, and other variables), researchers need the thorough investigation that a qualitative case study can provide (Flores, 2001). Case study has proven exceptionally useful for studying educational innovations (Merriam, 1998).

Since the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection, a lack of objectivity on the part of the researcher could have lead to bias. The quality of the data was dependent on the effectiveness of the researcher in her interviews and observations.

The researcher was left to rely on her instincts and abilities throughout most of the research efforts (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba pointed out that case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to a wrong conclusion about the actual reality of the environment. Even though case studies provide for rich, thick description and analysis, a researcher may not have time or money to spend on such a project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which may lead to gaps in data collection. Despite these potential limitations, this study was conducted with a qualitative approach. It was most appropriate because of the nature of this study.

Description of Sample

The three districts used in this study were determined through the use of purposeful sampling. The first step was to review all of the school districts in which concerns were either phoned in, mailed in, emailed in; or had been assigned monitors by the Texas Education Agency. After a list was generated, the location of the district was used to eliminate districts that were more than 700 miles away from the researcher's location. Next, two of the districts were chosen because the superintendent had either been fired or reinstated to his/her position. One district was chosen because of the length of tenure of the superintendent. To understand all the events that happened, two school board members for each superintendent were selected to participate in the study. The researcher contacted the superintendents by phone or email to see if they would participate in the study. School board members were contacted via phone or email. Their participation was voluntary. Upon acceptance by the superintendents and board

members, the researcher obtained background information through media sources, school districts' archives, and TEA archives.

Procedures and Data Collection

Internal Review Board (IRB) approval was awarded on January 5, 2007 (IRB protocol # 2006-07-0011) before the researcher started the collection of data. The researcher was the most significant instrument in qualitative study. She adapted to the environment and responded to those with whom interaction was made. The significance of this was that the human instrument established contact and interacted with the individuals being studied. The researcher prepared for the study to ensure validity given the importance of the human instrument by researching the history and demographics of the district (Flores, 2001), including the superintendent's professional history and the school board. Aliases were given to all participants and districts.

Face-to-face interviews were the principal form of data collection for this study. Interviewing allowed the researcher to gain the interviewee's perspective (Lewin, 2004). Each participant had one interview lasting forty-five minutes to an hour. The interviews took place at the district's central office or the participant's office. All interviews were taped and transcribed professionally. The transcriptions were reviewed by the participants as a means of member check.

Documents were a major source of data (Flores, 2001). The researcher reviewed the districts' vision and mission statements; board packets; school board agendas; and memos written to the central office and administrators from the superintendent.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was a complex task in a naturalistic inquiry study. According to Gay, and Airasian, (2000) data analysis involves organizing what the researcher saw, heard and read so that all information made sense and clearly presented what the researcher learned. Working with the data, the researcher described, created explanations and developed theories to link one story to another. The researcher brought order to the process of data analysis through open and axial coding, triangulation by analyzing of transcription by participants and peer reviews and document review.

After the tapes were transcribed, the transcript was mailed to the participants for their verification. Data analysis consisted of three concurrent flows of activities: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. Data collection referred to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appeared in written-up field notes or transcriptions. Data reduction was a form of analysis that sharpened, sorted, focused, discarded, and organized data in such a way that “final” conclusions could be drawn and verified. Qualitative data can be reduced and transformed through selection, summary, or paraphrase, or through being subsumed in a larger pattern. Data display was an organized, compressed assembly of information that permitted conclusion-drawing and action. Designing a display occurred when the researcher decided on the rows and columns of a matrix for data and which data, in which form, should be entered in the cells. As with data reduction, the creation and use of displays was not separate from analysis; it was a part of it. The last activity was conclusion-drawing and verification. From the start of data collection, the researcher

confirmed definitions, noted regularities, determined patterns, clarified explanations, and denoted possible configurations, causal flows and propositions. Conclusions were verified by peer review. The conclusions from the data had to be tested for their plausibility, sturdiness, and conformability, which was the validity; otherwise, what would result would be interesting stories about what happened (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative case study of three school districts, two board members and the superintendent for each district. Aliases were assigned to each participant and school district. The purpose of this study was to provide information related to strategies to aid in the development or the improvement of school board-and-superintendent relationship. The methodological approach was based on an interpretivist perspective. The conceptual framework was from a social psychology, based on the framework of Parsons' social action system theory. Open coding and axial coding were used to analyze the data. Trustworthiness was sought by utilizing the methods of Miles and Huberman. Chapter four provides profiles of the three school districts, school board members and superintendents.

CHAPTER FOUR

District, School Board Member, Superintendent Profiles and Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the methods used by school boards and superintendents to prevent role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities. It was also the intent of this study to investigate how the relationship between the school board and the superintendent affect the superintendent's job. All participants and districts were assigned aliases to protect their anonymity. School profiles have also been modified to protect the identity of the districts. This chapter gives a profile of Fair Oaks ISD, Hill City ISD, and Kyle Town ISD, school board members, and superintendents participating in this study.

Qualitative research involves fieldwork; as a result the researcher physically went to the people, setting, site, and institution in order to observe behavior in its natural setting (Merriam, 1998). In order to provide greater detail, the majority of this chapter is written in narrative form. This way a description of each district and procedures employed in conducting interviews and data collection is provided. Also in this chapter is background on the district. Actual commentaries from the school board member and superintendent are presented in order to provide an understanding of the board/superintendent relationship. Since qualitative research allows for the "telling of stories," it is advantageous to accurately capture the quintessence of the districts participating in this research. The intent is to provide other school boards guidance on the elements necessary to create and maintain a positive, bond between the school board

and superintendent. In order to assure anonymity, aliases and pseudonyms are used for all participants and school districts.

Fair Oaks Independent School District

District's Profile

Fair Oaks Independent School District is the youngest independent school system in northeast Texas. Fair Oaks is located in Mountain View County. Once a rural school district, Fair Oaks has since evolved from a small system with less than 500 students to an educational organization with nearly 20,000 students.

Fair Oaks' district mission is to develop and implement a curriculum that challenges all students, and providing a safe learning environment for all to learn, the district could achieve an academically superior status. They fostered community involvement in order to create environment needed to prepare and meet the needs of all students.

Table 2 represents the ethnic break down of the faculty, staff and students within the districts.

Table 2: 2005-2006 Demographics for Fair Oaks Independent School District

	Teachers %	Students%
African American	7.6	27.7
Hispanic	20.2	44.6
White	70.8	24.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2	2.6
Native American	0.2	0.4
Economically Disadvantaged		54.2

Fair Oaks had a district accreditation rating of “Acceptable” for the 2005-2006 school year. Forty-nine percent of the budget was spent on instruction and the per pupil operating expenditure was \$6,400. The student/teacher ratio was approximately 15 to 1

Table 3: 2005-006 Academic Performance of Fair Oaks Independent School District

Percent of students meeting 2005-2006 Accreditation Standards

	District
Reading/English Language Arts	87.0
Mathematics	71.0
Writing	90.0
Science	70.0
Social Studies	89.0
All Tests	95.2
Tested TAKS/SDAA	98.2
Dropout Rate*	0.1
Completion Rate**	90.0
Attendance Rate	96.0

Table 3 represents the percentage of student that mastered the state assessment for all grade levels. The completion rate reflected the percentage of high school students graduating, completing a GED, or continuing high school beyond their senior year.

School Board Profile

Fair Oak’s School Board is comprised of seven members who are elected by single member districts for three year terms. There are four males and three females. Four of the board members are white, two are African American and one is Hispanic. Within the last five years, there have been nine different people elected to the board. This information was obtained when a question was raised about whose name should be placed on the historical plaque for a new school. If each board member’s name was placed on the plaque from the time the bond passed until the school was erected, the

number of names would be twelve. This number includes three superintendents. One board member has served three terms, two have served two terms, and four are serving their first term.

The district was chosen for inclusion in the study because of the number of telephone calls, emails, and/or letters of complaint about the district received by Texas Education Agency (TEA). According to Ron Rowell, Senior Director of School Governance, EEO and Complaints Management, Fair Oaks was almost assigned a monitor because of governance issues. However, TEA has only assigned monitors for academic reasons. Paul Smith and Susan Brown (both names are aliases) were the two board members who agreed to participate in the research study.

Paul Smith has been a school board member for the past eight years. He stated that;

Education should be created for each individual student, and I am no fan of standardized testing because it tends to eliminate rather than provide an education for the students. Every child should have an opportunity to succeed. Sometime teachers and administrators take away students' opportunities by creating other opposition for them. For example, if a student fails a part of the TAKS, they are taken out of their elective class and placed into another math or reading class. We (the district) should use the 'village approach' in educating children by creating opportunities for parents to participate in their child's education. We will continue to have the problems that we are having until we get the parents more involved.

Susan Brown has been a school board member for three years. Her philosophy of education is "all children can learn with a proper learning environment. With this learning environment, academic achievement can be obtained."

Superintendent's Profile

Dr. Greg Jones has been a superintendent for the past eight years. He started as a teacher and moved up the ladder to superintendent. He has also worked at a university.

Dr. Jones commented that;

In education 'warmed over common sense is often more effective than piping hot innovation.' Student success comes through focused and purposeful instruction. I facilitate and provide meaningful leadership based on "common sense" initiatives. My philosophy and efforts focus on research-based instruction so that student achievement remains the main goal. My experiences in various subjects have given me the foundation necessary for practical school improvement in all areas. I believe in the 'three R's': rigor, relevance, and relationships. By building solid relationships with the board, staff, parents, and students, I gain the momentum necessary to achieve academic excellence. While I may not have all the solutions, I have the perseverance to overcome challenges. Even more important, I have the skills to build a cooperative and successful 'Team of 8' using open communication and 'common-sense.' In summary, having been reared as a farm boy, educated as a city-slicker, tamed as a husband, and humbled as a father, I find it prudent to pray for more 'common sense' every day.

Kyle Town Independent School District

District's Profile

The Kyle Town Independent School District evolved from many small isolated settlement schools serving several students to a unified School District providing quality education for nearly 8,000 students. In the 1800's, small rural schools were established by the many ethnic communities scattered throughout a 200-square mile area. These schools later formed school districts which came under one authority. In 1940's the Kyle Town School District was formed which brought together almost two dozen smaller districts. Later that same year, the Board elected to become a Rural High School

District. In the 1960's, the School Board voted to become an Independent School District.

An extensive academic program, aligned across and between grade levels, is supported by the technology. All schools in the districts offers enrichment courses, gifted and talented, bilingual education or English as a second language, special education, and a large menu of electives and extracurricular activities. The middle schools offer pre-advanced placement courses. The high school offers dual credit (high school and college), advanced placement courses, and instruction based on small learning communities.

Academic achievement is fostered by high expectations of both staff and students. The students' academic performance is monitored effectively and the results utilized in planning goals and objectives. A strong commitment to preparing students to function in an ever-changing technological world accompanies the district goals for a solid basic education for all.

Table 4 represents the ethnic break down of the faculty, staff and students within the districts.

Table 4: 2005-2006 Demographics for Kyle Town Independent School District

	Teachers	Students
African American	4.4	10.9
Hispanic	22.2	55.4
White	71.9	33.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.4	0.3
Native American	1.2	0.3
Economically Disadvantaged		56.4

The district had an accreditation rating of “Acceptable” for the 2005-2006 school year. Fifty percent of the budget was spent on instruction and the per pupil operating expenditure was about \$64,000. The student/teacher ratio is approximately 16 to 1.

Table 5: 2005-006 Academic Performance for Kyle Town Independent School District

Percent of students meeting 2005-2006 Accreditation Standards

	District
Mathematics	69.0
Science	66.0
All Tests	61.0
Tested TAKS/SDAA	97.5
Completion Rate	87.5
Attendance Rate	95.3

Table 5 represents the percentage of students that mastered the state assessment for all grade levels. The completion rate reflected the percentage of high school students graduating, completing a GED, or continuing high school beyond their senior year.

School Board Profile

Kyle Town School Board is comprised of seven members who are elected by single-member districts for three-year term. There are three males and four females. Five of the board members are White and two are Hispanic. Four have had multiple terms and three had one term. Only five of the board members were serving when a monitor was assigned to the district for ten months. Joe Cook and Thomas Miller are not currently serving on the board; however, they agreed to participate because they were serving when the monitor was assigned.

Joe Cook was a board member for over three years. He believes;

Education should teach students how to learn the skills that are required for success in life such as reading, writing, math, and history along with learning social skills, to be able to cope and deal with people no matter where they come from or how they differ in race or religion.

Thomas Miller was a board member for almost 20 years. Mr. Miller stated that “the school district should provide every child, regardless of potential or challenges, an education in a clean and safe environment.”

Superintendent's Profile

Kenneth Jackson has served as superintendent of Kyle Town for over five years. He started his educational career in the 1970's as a teacher. Mr. Jackson was a principal before becoming a superintendent. His philosophy of education is:

The concept that all children can and will learn is internalized in most educators now. I hold this belief close to my heart, but I do believe the statement has become simplistic. It is true that all children can and will learn, but it is up to the system, the school district, to provide the time, the proper teaching methodologies, and the environment necessary for children to succeed. Without the leadership of the system itself, the organization will splinter off into many directions, affecting the education of all parties. As educators and leaders in education, it is up to us to ensure that all children under our care get the best education possible and not that our children simply ‘just go to school’.

Monitor's Report

Kyle Town was assigned a monitor due to governance problems. TEA had received telephone calls, emails, and letters in reference to the conflict between the board and superintendent. During this time, the majority of recommendations by the superintendent were voted down 4 to 3. School board members were going into the schools asking for reports and requesting that certain things be done their way. For

example, the board sold land that had been allocated for a new school and purchased land on a different side of the district. The board voted (4 to 3) to move the May elections of school board members to November. There were many newspaper articles and television reports on the behavior and the activities of the board and superintendent. The initial report from the monitor found several problems. First, communication among school board members, between the school attorney and members of the board, and between the members of the community and the board was at times divisive. Second, there was a lack of communication between the board president and the superintendent on the development and design of the board agenda. Third, a lack of trust between four board members and superintendent was evident. Fourth, the pattern of split vote 4-3, was consistent. Fifth, no planning process with clear, measurable objectives and a district-planning calendar were in place. Sixth, no accountability measures and training on roles and responsibilities were present. Seventh, no plan on addressing budget issues (a 2 million dollar deficit) had been development. Finally, the monitor also noted;

It is absolutely critical that all members of the board address the identified governance issues in order to focus on important district and student learning needs. If the board was unwilling to clear governance issues that had been identified, then the monitor would recommend that TEA assign a conservator. The monitor requested the following topics to be discussed at the training for the board members and superintendent: governance vs. management, board role, definition of corporate body, board authority, information vs. reports, effective meeting procedures, and information vs. investigation. In the third month's report the monitor stated that "board relationship issues and superintendent evaluation issues are taking time away from student learning."

The monitor sent a board member a memo in reference to his/her talking to the high school tennis coach about the hiring of an assistant coach. The memo said that board members should remember that the day-to-day operation and hiring of the assistant coach was outside of their authority. This memo did not prevent this board member or others from inserting themselves into the day-to-day operation of the district. The board member said that they were just trying to improve the morale of the faculty and staff. Another memo was sent by the monitor to the board and superintendent about board meeting decorum. During board meetings, members were using profanity and making personal statements to each other and the superintendent. They were warned about talking about the superintendent and his evaluation to the media. The board members continued to speak with the media about the superintendent and his evaluation, including information which was discussed during the closed session of the meeting.

During the seven months with the monitor, the relationship between the board and superintendent had some improvements and many set backs. There were still many problems that needed to be resolved. For instance, board members were not attending the training provided by the monitor. During one month, the board placed the superintendent on administrative leave and voted, 4-3 not to renew his contract. Once an interim superintendent was named, some of the problems from the initial report were addressed; clear and measurable objectives were developed; and a balanced budget was passed. In a memo, the monitor told the board and administration that there were great division, acrimony, and lack of focus by some members of the board on extremely

important student learning priorities. The memo added that it is critical for the board to look to the future, work as a team, and focus on student learning priorities.

During the board meeting following the election of new board members, the superintendent was reinstated by the vote of 5 to 2. During that vote one of the board members voiced the vote as “hell no”; the board president requested that the vote be written as “abstention”, and two board members walked out of the meeting. Two of the four board members who voted non-renewal of the superintendent contract were not re-elected.

The monitor’s final report found that all governance issues had been addressed, clear and measurable objectives were adopted, and a balanced budget was approved. The monitor still had a concern that there was a lack of trust; however, the board president and the superintendent believed that the board could govern effectively with the election of two new board members. The monitor contended that the board would not be able to reach the highest level of performance until every effort has been made to achieve closure on issues that influence trust and respect among the members of the board.

Hill City Independent School District

District’s Profile

At the turn of the twentieth century the area that makes up the Hill City Independent School district was mostly brush, rocks, rattlesnakes, and prickly pear bushes. A few hardy pioneers had already settled the land around this area because of the abundance of water. Seven of the common schools joined together to become the

Hill City Rural School District. As the district grew in student population, the governing board of officials voted in the 1960's to become the Hill City Independent School District. The U. S. Department of Education bestowed the Blue Ribbon Award to three of the district's schools in 2000 and three in 2001. Career and technology education courses are offered at all middle and high school campuses. A full range of bilingual and special education programs are available to students. Hill City's boards strive to challenge and encourage each student to achieve and demonstrate academic excellence and technical skills in order to become responsible citizens.

Table 6 represents the ethnic break down of the faculty, staff and students within the districts.

Table 6: 2005-2006 Demographics of Hill City Independent School District

	Teachers	Students
Hispanic	19.8	44.0
White	77.2	42.5
Economically Disadvantaged		38.4

Hill City has a district accreditation rating of "Recognized" for the 2005-2006 school year. Fifty-one percent of the budget was spent on instruction and the per pupil operating expenditure was about \$6,700. The student/teacher ratio is approximately 15 to 1.

Table 7:2005-2006 Academic Performance of Hill City Independent School District

Percent of students meeting 2005-2006 Accreditation Standards

	District
All Tests	79.0
Completion Rate**	94.0
Attendance Rate	95.3

Table 7 represents the percentage of student that mastered the state assessment for all grade levels. The completion rate reflected the percentage of high school students graduating, completing a GED, or continuing high school beyond their senior year.

School Board Profile

Since 1996, a single member district system has been in place for the election of board members; the board members are elected by the district in which they reside. The board consists of seven members serving four-year terms. There are two males and five females; six members are white and one African American. Six members have served multiple terms. Hill City was chosen for this research study because of the consistency of the board and the longevity of the superintendent. Dr. Johnson has served as the superintendent of Hill City ISD for over fifteen years. Sandra Williams and Lisa Green were the two board members who agreed to participate in the study.

Sandra Williams has two terms on the board. Her philosophy is;

Education is the great equalizer. A public education should provide academic excellence for all students. These are, after all, the people who will pay into our social security, pay property taxes when ours are frozen and sustain and develop a healthy economy for our nation. It is the one area above all where we should not compromise or cut corners.

Lisa Green has served the board for less than one term. Her philosophy of education is;

Education is a key, a 'skeleton key' that can open any door. It is the key which opens doors of freedom from poverty, government, business and public service organizations. Education is a highway that leads into every part of the world and improves every life it touches as the road continues

to expand. Everyone touched by education is a better person and in turn helps create a better world.

Superintendent's Profile

Dr. Adam Johnson has served Hill City for over fifteen years. He started his education career in 1972 as a teacher and then an assistant principal. In 1987, Dr. Johnson returned to Hill City in an administrative role. In 1990, he was chosen the superintendent of Hill City.

Dr. Johnson's philosophy of education is;

In education, in business, in our personal lives, change is the only constant in today's world. As educators, we must prepare our students to experience success in a world and in a time which we will never see. That means teaching our children to thrive in an atmosphere of change.

Findings

This case study of Fair City Independent School District, Kyle Town Independent School District and Hill City Independent School District, focused on the four research questions:

1. What type of group interactions occurred among the school board members and the superintendent?
2. How did the board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent?
3. In what ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence the board/superintendent relationship?
4. In what ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on the board/superintendent relationship?

The themes that emerged from the data are discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter and presented according to the research question.

Research Question 1: What type of group interactions occurred among the school board members and the superintendent?

The definition of group interaction was similar for all participants. All acknowledged free flowing, regular and open communication as an important part of creating a productive board/superintendent relationship. Paul Smith of Fair Oaks ISD added to this idea by saying that communication should not only occur in a group setting but also one-on-one with individual board members. Dr. Greg Jones of Fair Oaks ISD said by stating that board members should be given as much information and data as possible.

When the board members were asked to explain the type of group interaction that occurred between their board and superintendent, the responses differed for Fair City and Kyle Town. Fair City's board members, Paul Smith and Susan Brown, stated that there was no communication or trust in the board packets that included an agenda and background information for items to be discussed at the board meeting or special sessions, which were delivered prior to the board meeting. The contents of the packets were different than the data and information presented at the board meeting. Participants declined to give specific examples. More individual communication was needed because the board members interviewed felt that their board was more like a board of three-and-a-half instead of eight. The participant that three board members consistently voted the same.

Kyle Town board members believed the monitor's suggestions to the school board and superintendent on how they should address issues as a group would benefit them as well as the district. "These suggestions or guidelines were more important than our own because of the mistrust that an unproductive atmosphere created." Mr. Jackson, Kyle Town's superintendent, agreed with his board members by saying:

Our group interaction was non-beneficial, business was conducted because certain members of the board voted together. The tensions and disdain for each other was very evident at board meetings or any session. The negativity affected the operation of the board, the district, the board's ability to do their job and my ability to do my job; so, there was very little benefit to the district.

Hill City's board members Sandra Castillo and Sonia Holder's descriptions of their group interactions with the superintendent were the same as the above definitions of group interaction. They stated that they had positive attitudes, left their egos at the door, and had no personal agendas. They all had the students' best interests at heart, and these feelings were the core of all decisions. Dr. Johnson, the superintendent stated that he believed there are two different types of interactions that occur between the superintendent and board:

The first type of relationship was informal, the getting to know the other person that the superintendent really should take the time to do with each board member. What I mean by informal is to learn about them and their family, and what they are interested in. This takes a lot of listening, a lot of talk about their goals, what they would like to do during their term, and what areas of the board interest them. The second type is a formal relationship. This should take place with the entire board, since a school board has really no authority unless it sits as a board. The superintendent must be very careful to share all information equally and respond to questions from each board member, then share the information with all board members so that everyone understands what is going on and what

kind of questions are being asked. I found it a good practice that everyone knew what the concerns were in each single-member district or the district as a whole. The formal relationship should be very courteous one that respects the board's responsibility as the governing body-and provides guidance to the board members to understand the complexity of education and finance. Board members are not together many hours during the week, so they have homework. What are the best ways to help board members understand information? Send reports or a board packet as an email; include charts, graphs or any form of communication that suits the individual board member. I found it very useful to have someone in the office who handled all of the little questions that the board members might have. If the board members felt comfortable with the information, they would feel well informed and not feel that they are being talked down to. They know that I am always available to discuss issues with them; however, if they had a particular question about anything, they knew that the question and the information would be shared with everyone.

Table 7 demonstrates the common themes that emerge for research question one.

The four major themes were honesty, free flowing communication, mutual respect and trust.

The first theme honesty as stated by Susan Brown of Fair Oaks "is the key for building a positive board/superintendent relationship." Dr. Adam Johnson believes the second theme "free flowing communication is imperative in order for the board and superintendent to create a binding relationship." The third theme mutual respect was best explained by Joe Cook. He declared that "mutual respect is needed in order for the board and the superintendent to achieve district's goals." All but one participant acknowledged the fourth theme of trust as an important element in the development of a positive board/superintendent relationship.

Paul Smith of Fair Oaks conveyed his thought on honesty “as the glue that holds the relationship between the board and superintendent”. Lisa Green of Hill City stated honesty as “the foundation” of the relationship between the board and superintendent. Dr. Adam Johnson the superintendent of Hill City agreed with his board member by commenting that “honesty is one of the main components of his relationship building. He also added:

Building a healthy relationship is critical in order for a district to be successful. There are many components that are needed in order to develop the relationship and honesty is just one of them. If the board does not feel that the superintendent is being honest with them and vise-versa, than the relationship is doomed.

Joe Cook of Kyle Town acknowledged that honesty is important to develop the relationship between the board and the superintendent. He also commented the lack of honesty between some of the board members and the superintendent caused the majority of the problems in the district. Kenneth Jackson superintendent of Kyle Town wanted to create a positive relationship with the board; however he commented that “the lack of honesty between him and the board hinder the district from progressing in the direction the district needed to move”.

The second theme of free flowing communication is described best by Susan Brown of Fair Oaks. She acknowledged:

Free flowing communication occurs when the board and superintendent can speak freely on any issues and their opinions will not be held against them. The board can asked the superintendent any question and they would receive an answer, even if the superintendent has to do some research on it. The superintendent will give the board all information

and data needed in order for the board to make sound, data driven decision.

Dr. Greg Jones communicated this:

Free flowing communication comes with a productive and binding relationship and everyone will abide and apply to it. There are no surprises and gives the benefit of the doubt that the other individual is doing the right thing. If there are rumors or appearances of inappropriate behavior or problems the assumption will go that there are other factors that either the board member or the superintendent does not understand that create a communication problem.

Paul Smith stated the following:

Any kind of productive interaction, are going to have to involve fairly regular communication and the successful superintendents that I seen do that both in a group setting and more importantly on an individual basis. The superintendent has to create with the board the relationship of open communication.

Lisa Green and Sandra Williams both stated that good communication between the board and superintendent is needed for the board and superintendent to carry out the goals of the district. Dr. Adam Johnson added that communication between the board and superintendent is one of the factors that can destroy the relationship between the board and the superintendent if this is not created properly. Joe Cook affirmed that “if my board was able to allow the communication to flow freely than the board may not have been assigned a monitor”. Thomas Miller communicated that the superintendent did not allow the board to communicate openly and freely. He believed that this is one of the reasons why the board and the superintendent were not effective.

Mutual respect by the board and superintendent emerged as a theme throughout the data. Dr. Greg Jones expressed the following:

If everyone would come together and do not let things personal, although it is very hard at times, we can achieve the goals of the district. If ourselves first than we can respect each other. An atmosphere of respect is important in order for the business to be conducted.

Dr. Adam Johnson avowed that “mutual respect on both sides of the table is needed in order for the board and superintendent to come to any type of agreement on any decision”. Sandra Williams supported her superintendent by acknowledging that their board members have mutual respect for each other even when they do not agreed on the issue being discussed.

Joe Cook and Kenneth Jackson both affirmed that the lack of mutual respect for the board and the superintendent prevented their board from accomplishing the goals of the district. Thomas Miller declared the lack of the respect from the superintendent caused the board to split.

The final theme that emerged from the data was trust. All participants except one stated trust as an important element in a productive board and superintendent relationship, Dr. Adam Johnson summed his thoughts as:

Trust is underline with honesty and respect. In order for a person to trust you, they have to believe that you are being honest with them because you respect them. All of these things go hand in hand, you can not have one without the other.

Table 8: Data for Research Question 1

Participants	Honesty	Free Flowing Communication	Respect	Mutual Trust
Fair Oaks ISD				
Susan Brown	X	X		
Dr. Greg Jones		X	X	X
Paul Smith	X	X		X
Hill City ISD				
Lisa Green	X	X		X
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	X	X	X
Sandra Williams		X	X	X
Kyle Town ISD				
Joe Cook	X	X	X	X
Kenneth Jackson	X		X	X
Thomas Miller		X	X	X
Total of responses for each theme	6/9	8/9	6/9	8/9

Research Question 2: How did the board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent?

Information Processing

Trust and free flowing communication were themes expressed by all participants when asked the question about information processing and the board/superintendent relationship. All participants believed that having mutual respect for each other was not as important as free flowing communication. Table 9 describes the participants'

comments on how the board/superintendent relationship affected information processing. Susan Brown board, member for Fair Oaks, believed the sending of mixed messages and poor communication not only hindered the information process and goal setting but was the main cause of conflict. She said that, there was no conflict management, just conflict. Dr. Jones, Fair Oaks' superintendent, found that some members of the board, and himself, were being cautious about revealing all of what might be necessary information because some people had alternative motives.

Kyle Town's board members, Joe Cook and Thomas Miller, avowed that information was not processed sufficiently because of the difference between information in the board packet and what was discussed at the board meeting. Superintendent Kenneth Jackson believed the division of the board made it impossible for him to give sufficient information because it was never enough or incorrect. Superintendent Jackson felt that the some of the board members sifted through board packets in order to find reasons to say that he did not give adequate information.

Table 9: Data for Research Question 2 (Information Processing)

Participants	Honesty	Free Flowing Communication	Respect	Mutual Trust
Fair Oaks ISD				
Susan Brown	X	X		X
Dr. Greg Jones		X		X
Paul Smith	X	X		X
Hill City ISD				
Lisa Green		X		X
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	X		X
Sandra Williams		X		X
Kyle Town ISD				
Joe Cook	X	X		X
Kenneth Jackson		X		X
Thomas Miller	X	X		X
Total of responses for each theme	5/9	9/9	0/9	9/9

Hill City’s board members, Sandra Williams and Lisa Green, agreed that information was given to them without hesitation by the superintendent. “Dr. Johnson anticipated what questions we may have, and answered them before we even asked. We only had to call or email him if we had any questions.” Lisa Green added that Dr. Johnson gave more information than what is expected by the board. Dr. Johnson stated “a superintendent would gain more trust from the board members if he/she gave all absolute and essential information while sharing individual concerns with the whole board.”

Conflict Management

Table 10 connects the comments of the participants with the four themes that emerged from the second part of research question two. Fair Oaks' board member, Susan Brown, felt that the superintendent needed to "lead the charge when board members went off on a tangent." Paul Smith acknowledged that the superintendent should rise to the level of demonstrating his ability to address conflict. Dr. Jones believed that, if everyone would come together and would not let things get personal, conflict could be controlled. He cautioned his board to play structural politics and to set realistic goals.

Joe Cook, board member of Kyle Town, shared that group discussions based on verbal comments directed to board members from the superintendent and/or other board members caused too much conflict. Thomas Miller believed this atmosphere prevented the board from achieving anything of significant. Superintendent Kenneth Jackson said about conflict with his board:

The conflict management had gotten to the point where there was no communication. There was no interaction whatsoever between both sides of the board. They just refused to talk to each other unless it was about an issue that concerned them. When this occurred, it became unprofessional and nothing was accomplished. It is not unusual in our business to have disagreements among board members on the direction a district would take, but it is rare when disagreement would deteriorate to the level we reached.

Hill City's board members, Sandra Williams and Lisa Green, believed the anchors (long-termed board members) helped to manage conflict, and that they all accepted and supported whatever the board decided.

Table 10: Data for Research Question 2 (Conflict Management)

Participants	Honesty	Free Flowing Communication	Respect	Mutual Trust
Fair Oaks ISD				
Susan Brown		X	X	X
Dr. Greg Jones	X	X	X	X
Paul Smith	X	X		X
Hill City ISD				
Lisa Green		X	X	X
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	X	X	X
Sandra Williams	X	X	X	X
Kyle Town ISD				
Joe Cook	X	X	X	X
Kenneth Jackson	X	X	X	X
Thomas Miller	X	X	X	X
Total of responses for each theme	7/9	9/9	8/9	9/9

Lisa added that all the talking and discussions would go back to what was best for the students. Hill City Superintendent Dr. Johnson was instrumental in finding common ground in order to manage conflict. He believed that it was up to the superintendent to find this area. This was an opportunity for him to facilitate discussions among board members. He stated that he was honest while being respectful, because the board needed the superintendent's help; so the superintendent should always offer to help, especially during conflict.

Goal Setting

Table 11: Data for Research Question 2 (Goal Setting)

Participants	Honesty	Free Flowing Communication	Respect	Mutual Trust
Fair Oaks ISD				
Susan Brown	X		X	X
Dr. Greg Jones		X	X	X
Paul Smith	X	X	X	
Hill City ISD				
Lisa Green	X		X	
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	X	X	X
Sandra Williams	X		X	X
Kyle Town ISD				
Joe Cook		X	X	
Kenneth Jackson	X		X	X
Thomas Miller		X	X	
Total of responses for each theme	6/9	5/9	9/9	5/9

Table 11 reflects the opinions of the participants for research question number two on goal setting. Fair Oaks' superintendent felt that goals needed to be realistic and have high expectations of the students. He also stated that small victories such as the passing of a bond authorization should be celebrated. The board members, on the other hand, stated that such celebration were hard to do when the board would never meet as a team. When goal-setting meetings were arranged, not everyone was present.

Thomas Miller of Kyle Town said that too much time was spent on try to suspend the superintendent, while Joe Cook believed that the goals set by the board were not implemented by the superintendent. Superintendent Kenneth Jackson stated most of

the board did not attend the annual goal setting workshop. He believed that they had enough for a quorum but it was a different group of board member showing up each time for meetings and one day retreats. This was non productive; goal setting was affected dramatically because none were developed.

Hill City board members stated that they came together as a board and developed goals which were best for the students. They also gave support to each other even if the decision did not go in their favor. Dr. Johnson allowed the board to discuss as much as they needed and provided as much information needed and/or required by the board.

Research Question 3: In what ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence board/superintendent relationship?

All school board members and superintendents had the basic knowledge when asked about the role and responsibility of the board members. They all understood that the role and responsibilities of the school board were to oversee management of the district. Paul Smith of Fair Oaks added that the board has only one employee, the superintendent. All participants also agreed that the superintendent's role and responsibilities were to be the chief executive officer and to oversee the day-to-day operations.

Table 12: Data for Research Question 3 (Roles & Responsibilities)

Participants	Knowledge of Roles & Responsibilities	
	School Board	Superintendent
Fair Oaks ISD		
Susan Brown	X	X
Dr. Greg Jones	X	X
Paul Smith	X	X
Hill City ISD		
Lisa Green	X	X
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	X
Sandra Williams	X	X
Kyle Town ISD		
Joe Cook	X	X
Kenneth Jackson	X	X
Thomas Miller	X	X
Total of responses	9/9	9/9

Dr. Adam Johnson of Hill City also declared that the role and responsibilities of the superintendent is to be the visionary of the district. Table 12 shows the responses of all the participants when asked to define the role and responsibilities of the school board and superintendent. Not only did the participants give the state's guideline for duties and responsibilities, a few even explained the national responsibilities. Some participants expressed how being members of Texas Association of School Boards or National Association of School Boards or a professional organization had helped them to learn their role and responsibilities. The additional opportunities for training and/or collaboration among colleagues provided useful information during times of trouble.

They had the opportunity to interact with other board members or superintendent that had experience similar issues.

Table 13 illustrates the participants' views on their role (role identity) and if it influenced the board/superintendents relationship. Susan Brown believed that role identity became a factor when the superintendent would do favors for individual board members that were inappropriate. For example, the superintendent moved the boundary lines for a new school in to enable a board members' child to attend the new school. Paul Smith strongly suggested that a good leader would remind the board of their role by referring to local, state or national policy on their role and duties. He also declared that if the superintendent would lead, then the board would not take the lead. Superintendent Dr. Greg Jones said the following on role identity:

I would not say there is a lack of it (role identity), just a lack of understanding. Only active citizens become school board members, they would not go through the election and the financial process of becoming a member if they did not care about the district. However, board members do not understand that what appears on the surface to be an action that will enhance school performance could result in actually inhibiting performance because the members often do not understand the complications with laws, policies and regulation, and the needs of the students. There are so many rules and regulations so many mandates from the state and federal government that even superintendents do not completely understand them all. At times I find members on the board getting very upset because they do not understand the regulations and mandates the district has to follow. I have to sit down with them and explain the reason why we had to make the decision in the manner that we did. After they have been through that a few times, they would typically leave the management to the professionals.

Table 13: Data for Research Question 3 (Role Identity)

Participants	Role Identity	
	Yes	No
Fair Oaks ISD		
Susan Brown	X	
Dr. Greg Jones		X
Paul Smith	X	
Hill City ISD		
Lisa Green		X
Dr. Adam Johnson		X
Sandra Williams		X
Kyle Town ISD		
Joe Cook	X	
Kenneth Jackson	X	
Thomas Miller	X	
Total of responses	5/9	4/9

Thomas Miller of Kyle Town said this:

I think it was very difficult for the superintendent to act in a manner that did not create more conflict. As a result, the board as a whole suffered in gaining sufficient amounts of insight into what was occurring simply because anything the superintendent said may have been construed very differently by board members. Obviously, considerations of those who were in support of the superintendent would be much different than the considerations of those who were against him; so, the superintendent had to be very sure that what he described or related to us was indeed in black and white rather than gray. The superintendent's comments could not be left up to the interpretations of others.

Joe Cook observed the following;

It is the superintendent's role to not be a dictator but to implement whatever direction the board had chosen as a body. The direction the school district

should travel should be based upon information from past years where improvement was needed in certain areas. Schools should be held accountable for not only academic but also for social skills, attendance, and community involvement. One cannot always look at only academics.

Superintendent Kenneth Jackson believed that the interpretation of policy was always clear cut, so roles did get confused. However this was not the case, board members still tried to cross their lines of authority. He acknowledged the following:

I thought the monitor was helping the board by advising us on duties and responsibilities, however this was not the case with all board members. They were not following the instructions of the monitor. The monitor gave us the interpretation of policy and the board still did follow suit.

Both of Hill City's board members stated that the lines between the roles of the superintendent and board were very clear. Every one knew his/her role and responsibilities. Lisa Green stated this was made clear up front. "The lines of communication were always open so if we had a question, we could have it answered before we met as a board." Superintendent Dr. Adam Johnson said:

In terms of role identity, I think the clearer the boundary lines are stated, the more easily responsibilities and what one will do can be worked out. For example, a lot of concerns come up about personnel. Clarification must be paramount at all times. Never assume that anyone knows or doesn't know what he/she was supposed to do. Always work to clarify the lines of communication and assist the board as much as possible.

Research Question 4: In what ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on board/superintendent relationship?

Fair Oaks school board member Susan Brown stated that a board should to have a strong superintendent but not a demanding one. She felt there had to be respect on

both sides. Brown believed that the superintendent had to be confident in knowing what he was supposed to do. She believed that when the superintendent was lacking in leadership, it caused the board to do the superintendent's job. Paul Smith said "strong leadership from the superintendent balanced the board, and then we, as board members, would not cross the line into someone else's responsibilities."

Table 14 explains the participants comments on the superintendent's leadership and if it had a positive or negative effect on the board/superintendent relationship. Susan Brown, Paul Smith and Joe Cook stated that the superintendent's leadership had a negative effect on the board/superintendent relationship. All other participants evaluated that the superintendent's leadership as positive.

Dr. Greg Jones stated the following:

My first and foremost obligation was to maintain professional decorum. I do a lot of mediating between board members to help them understand and to get to know each other. It is really difficult to demonize somebody that you know. If you do not know somebody and have not been around them, then it is really easy to demonize them. Relationship building that is purposefully done would include spending some time together, and listening and communicating with each other; however, the greatest part is to agree to disagree in a civil manner.

Kyle Town's school board member Thomas Miller believed that the superintendent's leadership was hindered by non-supporters because the tension between the two groups made it impossible to work together. Joe Cook believed the superintendent was a strong leader, but he was leading the district in the direction he wanted.

Table 14: Data for Research Question 4 (Superintendent's Leadership)

Participants	Positive	Negative
Fair Oaks ISD		
Susan Brown		X
Dr. Greg Jones	X	
Paul Smith		X
Hill City ISD		
Lisa Green	X	
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	
Sandra Williams	X	
Kyle Town ISD		
Joe Cook		X
Kenneth Jackson	X	
Thomas Miller	X	
Total of responses	6/9	3/9

Cook also said this:

The superintendent was not going in the direction the board had suggested. Whatever decision and direction we wanted to go, the superintendent was acting as if he was attempting to do so, but realistically, in a back door way, he was kind of undermining the direction, the board's decision.

Superintendent Kenneth Jackson admitted that he had a humbling experience during the time of conflict with the school board. He believed that his people skills, facilitator skills, and leadership skills could bring a group together or create a compromise of give and take. He declared:

I know that my role was limited. I really thought that I had the ability to bring people together in most cases, but I found out that I did not when personal feeling came to the surface and people were divided beyond my control. I had several board members say that I was the worst thing that ever happened in the

history of public education. I hope that's not true; so depending on which side you interview different people during that time period you will find someone who will say I displayed remarkable courage and integrity and leadership in the face of adversity. Then another would say that I was the worst thing that ever happened to public education in the history of this state. Well, again you'll find different opinions, but since you are asking mine, I felt that the board was acting in a manner that I interpreted to be payback, to right all wrongs, in their perception. They knew best, and they were going to do whatever they felt like doing regardless of the information they had in front of them. They changed policies to fit personal needs or dissolved decisions that prior boards had made. The board asked me to do several things that I did not agree with. It was not my role as superintendent to go along because someone says so. I have the responsibilities to go by on behalf of the district that I felt were in the best interest of the district. If the board voted and legally called an agenda item in the meeting and said that this was what we were going to do; it was my job to go do it and follow through and make that decision. It was also my role to state what I felt when it came to the best interest whether I disagreed or agreed.

Sandra Williams and Lisa Green both said that their superintendent's leadership ability was very strong that he was a phenomenal leader. They also stated that the superintendent made his views and opinions known, and that he did not tell the board what to do.

Dr. Johnson said the following about the superintendent's leadership:

A superintendent, as the chief executive officer, has to understand that he was elected, and that he has a great financial and political responsibility to his district. I think a superintendent must be a facilitator. The superintendent must be someone who can set a strong vision, and purpose, and clearly articulate that vision and purpose to move the district along in that positive direction by working with the school board. The board must approve agenda items that the superintendent may want to do. I think that the superintendent must be very careful that he/she does not have total control. The superintendent should have the power dispersed among board members. The superintendent who knows that the board members and he/she have to work and develop consensus among the board probably has the healthiest outlook about his/her job.

All board members acknowledged that the superintendent's leadership is one of the factors that either builds or destroys the relationship between the board and

superintendent. They also stated that the superintendent is the only one that has control over how they lead. The superintendents did not totally agree with the board members.

Table 15: Data for Research Question 4 (Board's Leadership)

Participants	Positive	Negative
Fair Oaks ISD		
Susan Brown		X
Dr. Greg Jones	X	
Paul Smith		X
Hill City ISD		
Lisa Green	X	
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	
Sandra Williams	X	
Kyle Town ISD		
Joe Cook	X	
Kenneth Jackson		X
Thomas Miller		X
Total of responses	5/9	4/9

Table 15 reflects the participants' responses to the question on the board leadership and the effects it had on the board/superintendent relationship. Susan Brown, Paul Smith, Kenneth Jackson and Thomas Miller stated that the board leadership had a negative effect on the board/superintendent relationship because the conflict between certain board members prevented the board from arriving at goals that could be implanting by the superintendent. All other participants felt that the board's leadership was positive.

Losing Trust

Fair Oaks, Kyle Town and Hill City board members and superintendents all acknowledged that one lie, favoritism, false data, personal agendas, false accusations, politics, assumptions, miscommunication, integrity issues, trying to cover up an issue or mistake can cause the board/superintendent to lose trust in superintendent/board. Other factors including lack of knowledge, incompetence, lack of control over staff, irrational behavior, failure to produce results, decisions that continuously go “south,” crossing the lines of governance can also contribute to board/superintendent losing trust in the superintendent/board. Kenneth Jackson expressed:

Dishonesty, miscommunication, lack of communication, favoritism, speaking from a superintendent’s point of view are things that can cause a board to lose trust in the superintendent. If you do not as a superintendent convey things to the school board in an honest, professional, thorough manner, then the board may lose trust in you. When this occurs than thing may go bad.

The common themes that emerged from the question on lose of trust were lack of communication, dishonesty, and favoritism. Table 16 illustrates the participants’ response. All participants except Joe Cook believed the lack of communication was a reason to lose trust. Only four participants, Lisa Green, Dr. Adam Johnson, Joe Cook and Thomas Miller acknowledged dishonesty is a factor for losing trust. Favoritism was a factor only for Susan Brown, Paul Smith, Dr. Adam Johnson, and Kenneth Jackson.

Later in the interview, the question was asked if the trust can be regained. Fair Oaks and Hill City board members and superintendents all believed that the trust could be regained. Fair Oaks Superintendent Dr. Greg Jones stated the following: “Yes, trust

and unity can be regained. It is amazing how one or two elements can really stir things up; however, these same two elements can build it back up.”

Table 16: Data for Losing Trust in a Board/Superintendent

Participants	Lack of Communication	Dishonesty	Favoritism
Fair Oaks ISD			
Susan Brown	X		X
Dr. Greg Jones	X		
Paul Smith	X		X
Hill City ISD			
Lisa Green	X	X	
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	X	X
Sandra Williams	X		
Kyle Town ISD			
Joe Cook		X	X
Kenneth Jackson	X		
Thomas Miller	X	X	
Total of responses for each theme	8/9	4/9	4/9

Table 17 reflects the participants’ responses on regaining trust. All participants except Joe Cook, Kenneth Jackson, and Thomas Miller believed that trust can be regained. Kenneth Jackson felt “regaining trust is very rare. I want to believe that it can be regained, but it is very rare.”

Table 17: Data for Can Trust be Regained

Participants	Yes	No
Fair Oaks ISD		
Susan Brown	X	
Dr. Greg Jones	X	
Paul Smith	X	
Hill City ISD		
Lisa Green	X	
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	
Sandra Williams	X	
Kyle Town ISD		
Joe Cook		X
Kenneth Jackson		X
Thomas Miller		X
Total of responses	6/9	3/9

Hill City's Superintendent Dr. Adam Johnson said this:

Yes, it would be very difficult. There would need to be a real honest discussion. Whoever had done wrong would need to say that this was not the right way to do it. Talk out the issue and try to mend it from there. I think it would take a real concerted effort for a board/superintendent to regain trust in the superintendent/board. It would take a lot of effort to regain and maintain that trust.

Kyle Town's school board members stated that the trust can be regained once it is lost between the board and the superintendent. Superintendent Kenneth Jackson stated that it is very rare for superintendent/board and board/superintendent to regain

trust, but it can be done. “This happened to me after being suspended by the board when I was reinstated.”

Trust can be regained if there is open and honesty dialogue between the board and superintendent on the issues that caused the conflict.

Incident that strained or caused the relationship to end prematurely

On the question regarding what prematurely ended or strained on the board and superintendent relationship, the board members stated location and names of new schools, the top ten percent of the graduating class, the hiring of football coaches and personnel issues were causes of conflict. School personnel and renewal of the superintendent’s contract were the two leading reason for causing a strain on the board/superintendent relationship.

All superintendents stated that personnel issues and/or contract issues were ones that had caused a strain on their relationship with the board.

Table 18: Data for Incident that Caused Strain on Board/Superintendent Relationship

Participants	Personnel Contracts	Superintendent's Contracts	Other
Fair Oaks ISD			
Susan Brown	X	X	
Dr. Greg Jones	X		X
Paul Smith	X	X	
Hill City ISD			
Lisa Green	X		
Dr. Adam Johnson	X		
Sandra Williams	X		X
Kyle Town ISD			
Joe Cook	X	X	
Kenneth Jackson	X	X	
Thomas Miller	X	X	
Total of responses for each theme	9/9	5/9	2/9

Fair Oaks Superintendent Dr. Greg Jones stated:

Any type of board intervention on a contract or renewing contracts can become a strain. Typically what happened would be that some board members would get phone calls from parents that may not like a particular teacher, principal or assistant principal. The board member would hear how horrible this person was because the parent of a child had been disciplined and the parents did not get the full story. Unfortunately, board members hear two or three stories on the same person, so in their mind, they tend to believe that the person in question is an evil, wicked person. Then we look through the administrators and their job performance and we get a different picture.

Table 18 indicates the participants' responses to the question. All other school board members and superintendents, except Hill City's board and superintendent stated the renewal superintendent contract as a cause for strain.

Training during conflict

All school board members and superintendents were able to state the basic requirements for training that TEA expects board members to attend.

Fair Oaks' board members and superintendent stated that there were many training opportunities. However, one problem was that the board members would not attend the training. "We could never have the entire board at a session. This was difficult when we were trying to do team building training." Fair Oaks' board members and superintendent also acknowledged that the board members that attended the training were more effective.

Kyle Town's board members and superintendent said that, because of the monitor's presence, they were required to attend additional training by TEA. They all conveyed that there were ample amounts of training, but, with board members walking out or refusing to attend the training, a difference was not observed.

Hill City's board members commented that Dr. Johnson placed information about training opportunities into their board packets. He also encouraged them to attend conferences and workshops. Superintendent Dr. Johnson acknowledged:

We plan our training. We work quite a bit on the numbers of training sessions how much it would cost for us to attend. We study the trends and information from the legislative action plan. We have trained ourselves on how to use this information more effectively, since this is what we are charged to do; we set the direction and goals for the future of this district.

In Table 19, four participants commented that a difference was seen with training. Lisa Green, Dr. Adam Johnson, Sandra Williams and Dr. Greg Jones stated that a difference was seen because of training. Susan Brown, Paul Smith, Joe Cook, Kenneth Jackson, and Thomas Miller believed that a change was not seen with training.

Table 19: Data for Difference Seen in Training

Participants	Yes	No
Fair Oaks ISD		
Susan Brown		X
Dr. Greg Jones	X	
Paul Smith		X
Hill City ISD		
Lisa Green	X	
Dr. Adam Johnson	X	
Sandra Williams	X	
Kyle Town ISD		
Joe Cook		X
Kenneth Jackson		X
Thomas Miller		X
Total of responses	4/9	5/9

Advise for new superintendents

Susan Brown of Fair Oaks' ISD recommendation was "honesty, at all times. No matter what, even if you are wrong. If you have made a mistake, just say you made a mistake. You can overcome anything when you are honest and tell the truth." Paul

Smith's affirmed were "as a new superintendent you should do more listening than talking. Understand how the board likes to work, and make it clear what your role to the board as superintendent is." Superintendent, Dr. Greg Jones, indicated that the board and superintendent should go to training and attend conferences together. "Come together with the board and determine what is best for the district. Mistakes are going to be made on both sides, so be tolerant of mistakes in the learning period and this will help the relationship grow."

Joe Cook of Kyle Town ISD statement was "simply do your job because the board helped you get your job. Do not be loyal to a particular group or section of the community. You have to be loyal to the entire community."

Thomas Miller gave this advise:

Superintendents across the state of Texas now have, in my opinion an almost difficult task, how to treat board members. He/she has to understand each board member individually, but yet understand that, as an individual, each has no more rights than anyone else because the board works as a whole. If you have that distrust with one board member, it could fester to two, and two goes to three, and three goes to four; so, it is very important right off the bat to work towards harmony among all the board members. It is up to the board members, too, to make everyone understand that this role that we were elected to is important; however, we have to understand that we are limited in what we can do.

Superintendent Kenneth Jackson's comments were these:

Time invested up front in building those relationships of trust, I know, will be worth everything. If the board felt like you were not attending their needs, they would cross the line. I have seen both sides of the aisle, and time spent building trust. I think the most valuable thing you could do with the board is build a good relationship. Now you have to do your job, too, not just building a friendly relationship and brown-nosing the board.

Sandra Williams of Hill City ISD commented that “communication and that is the bottom line.” Lisa Green simply suggested the following:

Have a mentor for superintendents who would help develop the situation of the board, and help develop a relationship. I think spending time with the board is important; we have meetings almost every week so that has helped to build a lot of this relationship because you get you know each other. If we had only met once a month, then we’d be on a different page.

Superintendent Dr. Adam Johnson declared this:

Always tell the truth; be open with what is happening; give them information; and help them understand what is happening. Never talk down to board members or show disrespect for them, and always try to help them understand. Remember they are elected officials, and never had any experience as board members. It is the job of the superintendent to help the board be successful and run a good school district.

Summary

Chapter Four introduced the participants in the research study. A description of each district was provided to the reader an understanding of the district, board and the superintendent. The board/superintendent relationship and its role in the managing of a district were detailed along with other major findings relevant to this study. Chapter four also provided all the data collected from Fair Oaks ISD, Kyle Town ISD and Hill City ISD. Chapter five provides a summary and conclusion of the research findings and suggestions for further research

CHAPTER FIVE

Limitations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to add to the understanding of methods used by school boards and superintendents to prevent role uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities. More specifically, this study investigated how the relationship between the school board and superintendent affected group interaction, information processing, conflict management and goal setting.

A positive board and superintendent relationship allows for a central focus on students and decisions that create a positive impact on student achievement (Flores, 2001). The review of literature provided a chronological view of the development of the public school system: from school boards to the birth of the school board/superintendent system on a national and state level. The literature also pointed out that the relationship between the superintendent and board is unique in each school district and in need of further investigation (Goodman, Fulbright, & Zimmerman, 1997). Currently, there is considerable concern in Texas and throughout the nation about the governance function in public schools. These concerns vary in a range of views, experiences, and individual community standards. In many cases, citizens became disappointed when their school district was distracted from serving in the best interests of their children by ongoing conflict among board members or between the board and the superintendent (Flores, 2001).

The board and superintendent comprise the main components of a school district's leadership and political structure. With the increasing demand and mandates for accountability in Texas' public schools, this relationship needs to contribute affectively and positively to the demand and mandates. While the board establishes policy and the superintendent administers the policy, the exact role of the two is crucial, yet difficult to determine. Although the board should periodically require reports in order to evaluate the district, the board should never become involved in the daily operation of the schools. Superintendents are trained to run the daily operations of the district; nevertheless, the board should never delegate so much of the control and authority that it becomes subservient to or of little or no value to the superintendent or district in decision-making (Flores, 2001).

The research approach selected for this research was a descriptive qualitative study. Qualitative case studies focused on holistic descriptions that give explanations because they are anchored in real-life situations. The quality of the data was dependent on the effectiveness of the researcher in his/her interviews and observation. Even though case studies provide for rich, thick description and analysis, a researcher may not have time or money to spend on such a project (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which may lead to gaps in data collection.

Summary of Research Questions

Research Question #1: What type of group interactions occurred among the school board members and the superintendent?

The data showed the type of interaction which occurred among the school board members and superintendent were honesty, free flowing communication, mutual respect and trust. These themes are needed and important in order to have positive interaction.

Research Question #2: How did the board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent?

The four themes listed in question one were used in determining how the board/superintendent relationship affected information processing, conflict management, and goal setting. The information process can be affected by the board/superintendent relationship. All themes stated above were mention except for mutual respect. If the board and superintendent lack honesty, free flow communication and trust, the information received may not be fully accepted. Free flowing communication and trust were affirmed by all participants; however honesty and mutual respect were cited. If the board and superintendent have these components in place before conflict occurs, then they can work through the issues or concerns without creating major conflict. Goal setting can be affected by the board/superintendent relationship. Mutual respect was affirmed by all participants, but honesty, free flowing communication and trust were mentioned. The data showed that the lack honesty, free flowing communication, mutual

respect, and trust may hinder the board and superintendent from developing and accomplishing goal.

Research Question #3: In what ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence board/superintendent relationship?

Role identity influenced the board/superintendent relationship by causing distrust, no communication, and no clear boundaries. Five of the nine participants agreed that their group structure, such as role identity, influence the board/superintendent relationship. The data also suggested that board members and superintendents know and understand their duties and responsibilities. However, the influence of role identity was not due to the lack of knowledge, but to personal agenda.

Research Question #4: In what ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on the board/superintendent relationship?

The superintendent's leadership may have a positive or negative effect on the board/superintendent relationship. Six of the nine participants acknowledged that the superintendent's leadership had a positive effect on the relationship. The board members declared that the superintendent is the only one that has control over this part of their relationship. The superintendents avowed that the board and the superintendent must work together in order for the superintendent's leadership to be effective.

Qualitative Analysis Limitations

Most qualitative researchers work alone in the field. The guidelines and procedures in Chapter 3 were based on the recommendations of Miles and Huberman (1994), which helped to organize ways of testing and confirming findings. There is a

long research tradition showing that human judgments are consistently less accurate than statistical studies (Canada, 1989).

Interview Limitations

Interviewing can leave many areas uncovered because it involves in-depth analysis rather than broad coverage. It also can produce biased data because the subject may be responding to the interviewer's presence rather than presenting an accurate account. There is the possibility that the interviewee may not have accurate perceptions. They may have forgotten or may be unwilling to relay all of the happenings or events (Murphy, 1980).

Interviewees were sometimes reluctant to initially give specific information about those issues discussed only during closed board sessions. Interviewees were informed that aliases would be used to protect the integrity of the individual and the school district. The researcher maintained a master list of aliases in a locked filing cabinet and interview transcripts are being kept confidential and will be destroyed upon the completion of the study.

Discussion

This research study on boards in distress: board members' and superintendents' perception of their roles and responsibilities during conflict generated these findings using the following categories from Parsons' Pattern Variable:

Affectivity v. Affective Neutrality

Self-Orientation v. Collective-Orientation

Transcendence v. Immanence

Ascription v. Achievement

Affectivity v. Affective Neutrality

In order for the school board to act as one unified body, each member would have to refrain from obtaining immediate gratification (affectivity). They would have to exercise self-restraint in the light of long-term consideration (affective neutrality). For the board and superintendent to prevent conflict, they have to be honest with each other, have mutual respect for each other, and have regular and free flowing communication individually and in group settings.

Honesty was identified as the primary factor in creating a positive board/superintendents relationship. Honesty is the element that will hold this relationship together. If this element is missing, then the board/superintendent relationship will begin to unravel. Honesty provides the interaction that creates the base of a fully functioning team.

To build a positive relationship between the board and the superintendent, the superintendent must have respect for the board members and vice-versa. If respect is not felt within the group, one member or the superintendent may cause discord within the group in order to obtain the respect. One example cited was treating board members or the superintendent differently among the group or as individuals.

Communication between the board and the superintendent needs to be free flowing and regular. The data from the board members revealed that the board relies on the superintendent to communicate all information needed in order for them to make competent and data-driven decisions. Since the superintendent is the professional on the team, it is imperative that he/she creates an atmosphere that allows the board to feel

informed on every topic, issue and/or situation. Giving different information on the same topic to board members is an example of inaccurate communication cited by board members. Board members acknowledged that the superintendent should not tell them one thing, then say something different in front of the assembled board.

Being honest with each other, having mutual respect for each other, regular and free flowing communication individually and in a group setting help the board and superintendent begin the process of creating a positive and productive relationship.

Self-Orientation v. Collective-Orientation

A school board may be comprised of seven elected members and the superintendent; however, having those individuals thinking and behaving as one is the problem that districts are facing. This problem is occurring because some of the board members are being elected for self-interest (self-orientation), not to serve the interest of the district (collective-orientation). Having personal agendas that create a divided board was the main reason contributing factor in causing conflict. Personal agendas along with a divided board may cause the board members and/or superintendents to second guess each other. Examples cited to support this data were board members speaking to principals in reference to hiring practices, board members requesting the firing of certain employees; and the superintendent not following the recommendations of the board.

Transcendence v. Immanence

Transcendence occurs when a person treats another person as falling under some general principle(s) in which there is/are no reference to oneself. This occurred when

the board members or superintendent went against requirements, mandates and directives.

Not attending board training was the response stated the most throughout the data. Board training is required by the Texas Education Agency for all board members and superintendent. The data showed that the districts that were in distress could not get all of their board members and superintendent to attend training together. Some of the board members mention that they did not have to attend the training because they did not need it. Evidence to support this was given by a district that was mandated by the state monitor to attend training and they still did not do so. Another example was that board members were given a directive not to speak to the media about the superintendent, but they continued to communicate their feelings to the media. One example was when the board had voted not to give the superintendent an extension on his evaluation. The superintendent started to communicate with certain board members after the vote in order to obtain an extension on the board agenda.

Immanence occurs when a person takes into account the group relationship and the general principle(s), and sees them as part of the relationship. Some of the board members stated that they would not make a decision without talking to everyone (this included all board members and the superintendent). For example, while preparing for the study, the researcher emailed all school board members about interviewing them after the superintendent agreed to participate in the study. The researcher contacted the only the board members interested in interviewing. The researcher did not inform the superintendents which board members were to be interviewed; however, during one of

the interviews the superintendent was able to give me the names of the board members who were going to be interviewed. The superintendent also knew the time and location of the interviews. This is an example of the free flowing and open communication between the boards and the superintendent.

Ascription v. Achievement

Overstepping boundaries is the primary factor in evidence for ascription. Ascription is the manner in which one person treats another, in light of his role or qualities. Parsons likened this to the person forgetting who they are (Black, 1961). The data showed that the board members and superintendent knew the definition of their roles and responsibilities to each other; however, ascription is one of the reasons that Texas boards are in distress (Phone conversation with Ron Rowell, Texas Education Agency, February, 2007). There is a very fine line between the role and responsibilities of the board and the superintendent. The school boards role and responsibilities consist of, but, are not limited to, developing policies, hiring the superintendent, and providing resources. The superintendents role and responsibilities consist of, but are not limited to, managing the day-to-day operations of the district. Conflict occurs when someone oversteps his/her boundaries.

The evidence shows that some of the board members would go to the individual campuses to speak with faculty and/or staff; or a board member would promise a parent that he/she would handle a situation that occurred with that parent's child/student. The data also showed evidence of the superintendent redirecting allocated funds to from items that had been approved by the board.

Preventing conflict takes the effort of all board members and the superintendent. Also having a board that knows and understands its role and responsibilities and maintains trust and honesty among the board is a necessity to be able to develop and accomplish the goals for the school district. When trust is lost, it is very difficult to retrieve. The majority of the participants believed if trust is lost, it can be regained. It may take some time, but it is possible to obtain. It was clearly seen throughout the data that if everyone is willing to be positive, leave his/her ego at the door, remember his/her role and responsibility, keep the students' best interest in mind, and make the students the core of all decisions, then the school board would only have to focus on the issues dealing with the advancement of the district. It has been suggested that there are other factors or specific competencies that can help create a bond but, based on this research, the researcher cannot conclude that the development of some special skills are not important in creating and maintaining a positive and productive board/superintendent relationship.

Recommendations for School Board Members and Superintendents

The following were pieces of advice that were given on how to prevent conflict and create a positive and productive board/superintendent relationship:

1. Know your role and responsibilities.
2. Do not overstep your boundaries.
3. Be honest.
4. Be mutually respectful.
5. Listen to each other. All voices are important.
6. Be realistic.

7. Be open.
8. Communicate effectively.
9. Give and obtain accurate information.
10. Agree to disagree.
11. Trust everyone.
12. Have no personal agendas.
13. Leave egos at the door.
14. Know when to lead and when to listen.
15. Attend training and/or conferences.
16. Get a mentor(s) for the board and superintendent.
17. Maintain professional decorum.
18. Be proactive.
19. Celebrate success.
20. Invest time into team building with the board.

Recommendations for Future Research

The analysis of the data indicates that honesty, trust, mutual respect, regular and free flowing communication, not overstepping boundaries, having no personal agendas, and following protocol will keep the board unified with behaviors that can create a positive and productive board/superintendent relationship. These behaviors may not prevent conflict, but they may help to decrease it.

Summary

The conclusion of this study is that conflict arises due to the failure of a positive and productive board/superintendent relationship. This failure is seldom due to lack of knowledge of the board and superintendents' role and responsibilities.

This investigation provides the foundation for further study on the experience of board members (consistency of the board), and team building between the school board and superintendent. Additional information on this topic would provide insight into ways of creating a positive and productive board/superintendent relationship.

This study examined the views of board members and superintendents in determining what can cause conflict that inhibits a positive and productive board/superintendent relationship from being created. Because this study only focused on three districts, certainly the limitation of size and scope should be considered in future studies.

APPENDIX A. IRB Approval Letter



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT & COMPLIANCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 (512) 471-8871 - FAX (512) 471-8873
North Office Building A, Suite 5.200 (Mail code A3200)

FWA # 00002030

Date: **01/05/07**

PI(s): **Raye L White**

Department & Mail Code:

Dear: **Raye L White**

IRB APPROVAL – IRB Protocol # **2006-07-0011**

Title: **Boards In Distress: School Boards and Superintendents
Perception of Their Role and Responsibility During**

In accordance with Federal Regulations for review of research protocols, the Institutional Review Board has reviewed the above referenced protocol and found that it met approval under an Expedited category for the following period of time: **01/05/2007 - 01/04/2008**

Expedited category of approval:

___(1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met. (a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review). (b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

___(2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or (b) from other adults and children², considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

___(3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by Non-invasive means.

Examples:

- (a) hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner;
- (b) deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
- (c) permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
- (d) excreta and external secretions (including sweat);
- (e) uncannulated saliva collected either in an un-stimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue;
- (f) placenta removed at delivery;
- (g) amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor;
- (h) supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the Process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques;
- (i) mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings;
- (j) sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

☐ (4) Collection of data through noninvasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications). Examples:

- (a) physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy;
- (b) weighing or testing sensory acuity;
- (c) magnetic resonance imaging;
- (d) electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography;
- (e) moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

☐ (5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis). (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt).

☒ (6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

☒ (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt).

☒ Please use the attached approved informed consent

☐ You have been granted Waiver of Documentation of Consent

According to 45 CFR 46.117, an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either:

☐ The research presents no more than minimal risk

AND

☐ The research involves procedures that do not require written consent when performed outside of a research setting

<OR>

☐ The principal risks are those associated with a breach of confidentiality concerning the subject's participation in the research

AND

☐ The consent document is the only record linking the subject with the research

AND

☐ This study is not FDA regulated (45 CFR 46.117)

AND

☐ Each participant will be asked whether the participant wishes documentation linking the participant with the research, and the participants wishes will govern.

☐ You have been granted Waiver of Informed Consent

According to 45 CFR 46.116(d), an IRB may waive or alter some or all of the requirements for Informed consent if:

☐ The research presents no more than minimal risk to subjects;

☐ The waiver will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of subjects;

☐ The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver; and

☐ Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information they have participated in the study.

___ This study is not FDA regulated (45 CFR 46.117)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FOR ONGOING PROTOCOLS:

- (1) Report **immediately** to the IRB any unanticipated problems.
- (2) Proposed changes in approved research during the period for which IRB approval cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participant. Changes in approved research initiated without IRB review and approval initiated to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participant must be promptly reported to the IRB, and reviewed under the unanticipated problems policy to determine whether the change was consistent with ensuring the participants continued welfare.
- (3) Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to take part.
- (4) Insure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
- (5) Use **only** a currently approved consent form (remember approval periods are for 12 months or less).
- (6) **Protect the confidentiality of all persons and personally identifiable data, and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of participants and information.**
- (7) Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s) prior to the implementation of the change.
- (8) Submit a **Continuing Review Report** for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require **IRB review of on-going projects no less than once a year** (a Continuing Review Report form and a reminder letter will be sent to you 2 months before your expiration date). Please note however, that if you do not receive a reminder from this office about your upcoming continuing review, it is the primary responsibility of the PI not to exceed the expiration date in collection of any information. Finally, it is the responsibility of the PI to submit the Continuing Review Report before the expiration period.
- (9) Notify the IRB when the study has been completed and complete the Final Report Form.
- (10) Please help us help you by including the above protocol number on all future correspondence relating to this protocol.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Sincerely,

Lisa Leiden, Ph.D., Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B. Consent Form

Title: Boards in Distress: School Boards' and Superintendents' Perception of Their Role and Responsibility During Conflict
IRB PROTOCOL # 2006-07-0011

Conducted By: Raye Lynn White Of University of Texas at Austin:

Telephone:

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to participate. Your participation is entirely voluntary; you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can terminate your participation at any time and your decision will not impact current or future relationships with the University of Texas in Austin or participating sites. To halt participation informs the researcher of your choice. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent form for your records.

The purpose of this study is to discover the perception of school board members and superintendents concerning their role and responsibility during conflict.

If you agree to be a respondent in this study, we will require the following:

- Participation in a ninety-minute audio-taped interview (Interviews will be coded so that no personally identifying information is available, secured, and used for research purposes only by the investigator.)
- Reading of interview transcripts for validity
-

Total estimated time to participate is 120 minutes- ninety minutes for the interview and thirty minutes to read transcriptions from interview.

Risks of participation would be no greater than any other life risk.

Benefits: None

Compensation: None

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- Tapes will be maintained in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. After transcription, the tapes will be destroyed. Interview transcripts will contain only the alias assigned to the individual. A master list of aliases will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Interview transcripts will be kept confidential and destroyed upon completion of the project.
- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

- The **records** of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and study sponsors, if any, have the legal right to review your research records but will protect the **confidentiality** of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available that might impact your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study; their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, please contact Lisa Leiden, Ph.D., Chair of The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C. Request Letter for Participations from School Board Members

Dear (School District Name) Board Member,
You are invited to participate in a research study that will examine the superintendents and school board's roles and responsibilities during conflict. As a University of Texas graduate student in the department of Educational Administration of the College of Education, I, Raye Lynn White, am requesting your participation in a research study to provide data for my dissertation.

As a fellow educational leader, I know that your time is valuable; however, the data obtained will focus this research on an attempt to discover how superintendents and school boards view their role and responsibilities during conflict. Your participation is essential to the success and validity of this research. (Superintendent's name) has agreed to participate. I need two board members to participate to ensure validity.

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed. Interviews will be approximately one hour in length and will be taped. Taped-recorded interviews will be transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Please note that excerpts from the interview may be quoted in a doctoral dissertation authored by the researcher. Any information that is obtained in connection with the study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential

I greatly appreciate your willingness to assist me with my research. If you have any questions regarding this letter and/or the consent form, please call me at (phone number) or e-mail me at (email address).com. Thank you for your help with this research.

Respectfully,

Raye Lynn White

APPENDIX D. Request Letter for Participations from Superintendents

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Superintendent's Name),

You are invited to participate in a research study that will examine the superintendents and school board's roles and responsibilities during conflict. As a University of Texas graduate student in the department of Educational Administration of the College of Education, I, Raye Lynn White, am requesting your participation in a research study to provide data for my dissertation.

As a fellow educational leader, I know that your time is valuable; however, the data obtained will focus this research on an attempt to discover how superintendents and school boards view their role and responsibilities during conflict. Your participation is essential to the success and validity of this research. Please sign and return the consent form by {date}.

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed. Interviews will be approximately one hour in length and will be taped. Taped-recorded interviews will be transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Please note that excerpts from the interview may be quoted in a doctoral dissertation authored by the researcher. Any information that is obtained in connection with the study, and that can be identified with you, will remain confidential

I greatly appreciate your willingness to assist me with my research. If you have any questions regarding this letter and/or the consent form, please call me at [phone] or e-mail me at [e-mail]. Thank you for your help with this research.

Respectfully,

Raye Lynn White

APPENDIX E. Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Question 1

1. What type of group interaction occurs between a school board and superintendent that create a productive and binding board/superintendent relationship?
2. What type of group interaction occurred between your school board and superintendent that create a productive and binding board/superintendent relationship?

Question 2

3. How did the board/superintendent relationship affect information processing, conflict management, and goal setting between the school board and the superintendent?

Question 3

4. What are the roles and responsibilities of the school board and superintendent?
5. In what ways did group structures, such as role identity, influence board/superintendent relationship?

Question 4

6. In what ways did the superintendent's leadership have an effect on board/superintendent relationship?
7. In what ways did the board's leadership have an effect on board/superintendent relationship?
8. How many years as a board member/superintendent?
9. What can cause a board/superintendent to lose trust in a superintendent/board?
10. Please identify a specific issue or incident that caused a strain between the board and superintendent?
11. What type of training was offered to the board/superintendent during the time of conflict? Did you see a difference?
12. If the board/superintendent loses trust in the superintendent/board, can it be regained? If yes how?
13. Do you have any advice for new superintendent on how to create and maintain a positive relationship between the board and superintendent?

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VITA

Raye Lynn White was born in Houston, Texas on February 19, 1969, the daughter of Lou Ella Williams and the late Raye Lee Bledseo. After graduating from Central High School, Beaumont, Texas, in 1987, she entered Prairie View A & M University in Prairie View, Texas. She received the degree of Bachelor of Science from Prairie View A & M University in December of 1990. Raye Lynn started her teaching career at Connell Middle School at San Antonio Independent School District, in San Antonio, Texas. Two years later she moved to Judson High School in Judson Independent School District, in Converse, Texas to teach Biology and Pre-Advanced Placement Biology. In September 1992, Raye Lynn entered the Graduate School at Prairie View A & M University. She received the degree of Masters of Education in Administration from Prairie View A & M University in 1994. In 2001, Raye Lynn moved to the East Central Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas as an Assistant Principal of Heritage Middle School. She entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin in 2004. In 2007, Raye Lynn transferred to the East Central Independent School District Central Office as the Coordinator of Personnel.

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This dissertation was typed by the author.